

EIGHT MAJOR EXEMPLARS OF THE
TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN NOVEL, 1900-1959

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BY
MONICA NALYAKA WANAMBISI
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH (HUMANITIES)

ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
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ABSTRACT

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Wanambisi, Monica N.

B.A. University of Nairobi, 1979
M.A. Atlanta University, 1982

EIGHT MAJOR EXEMPLARS OF THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN NOVEL, 1900-1959.

Advisor: Mrs. Lucy C. Grigsby

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This dissertation is a study of twentieth-century American novels which can be used in a course by Kenyan and other East African students and teachers. The selected novels can be studied as models for exemplification of the most significant developments and trends in longer American narrative fiction in the period covered by the study. Because of time limits and for purposes of presenting quality fictional works to be covered in one semester, eight novels were analyzed in this study. These are: Sister Carrie (1900) by Theodore Dreiser, The Great Gatsby (1925) by F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Sun Also Rises (1926) by Ernest Hemingway, Intruder in the Dust (1948) by William Faulkner, The Catcher in the Rye (1951) by J. D. Salinger, Invisible Man (1952) by Ralph Ellison, Go Tell It On The Mountain (1953) by James Baldwin and Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959) by Paule Marshall.

Each of the selected novels represents a component of significance in American literature during the era designated. Sister Carrie's strengths lie in its reflection of American life as affected by industrialization and consequent urbanization. The Great Gatsby and The Sun Also Rises vividly present significant themes of the First World

War's ill effects on some Americans and others. Intruder in the Dust examines tensions created by racial discrimination in the Southern United States. The Catcher in the Rye treats the theme of adolescence eloquently. Go Tell It on the Mountain vividly presents Baldwin's view of the damage that racial prejudice inflicts on both blacks and whites. Invisible Man is a powerful presentation of the black experience in the United States. Brown Girl, Brownstones vividly treats a range of subjects such as the crisis of adolescence, religion, poverty and the importance of tradition for the black American, to name but a few. In addition to other reasons, all were chosen because they are artistically significant literary works, some, for example, having won for their authors Pulitzer prizes or other major literary awards. Of course each novel was chosen for various other reasons which are elaborated in the study, but the above-named are most important.

In addition to those fundamental themes, which provide the focuses in analyzing each of the novels, the dissertation assembles specific types of information that teachers would find essential to furnish their students by way of introduction to and as the basis for study of the novels. Some of this material is for teacher-development, providing instructors kind of information that would give shape to their teaching of the course. The study also provides an organizational framework within which the course would be designed.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation outlines, explains and organizes a course in the twentieth-century American novel to be taught in post-secondary schools in Kenya or other East African countries. The targeted audience consists of teachers. The course is based on an era-study approach; that is, chronology is the organizing principle governing the arrangement of the subject matter. Thus, the course provides information which teachers could use if they were instructing such a course. Part of the information concerns the historical context of the chosen era, covering such important aspects as: the Industrial Revolution, the Great Depression and the First and Second World Wars. The dissertation also provides limited but important biographical information on the eight novelists, with analyses of critical responses to the novels and their authors.

The dissertation is divided into an introduction and six chapters. Chapter one contains a review of the literature relevant to this study. Chapter two is a general introduction to the twentieth-century American novel. Chapter three provides the rationale for the selection of the novels to be studied in the course. Chapters four and five contain critical discussions of each of these novels. Chapter six is the conclusion of the dissertation.

The eight novels referred to above, in their chronological order, are:

1. Sister Carrie (1900) by Theodore Dreiser

2. The Great Gatsby (1925) by F. Scott Fitzgerald
3. The Sun Also Rises (1926) by Ernest Hemingway
4. Intruder in the Dust (1948) by William Faulkner
5. The Catcher in the Rye (1951) by J. D. Salinger
6. Invisible Man (1952) by Ralph Ellison
7. Go Tell It On The Mountain (1953) by James Baldwin
8. Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959) by Paule Marshall.

The novels have been chosen for various reasons. First, they were selected because of their importance in reflecting the life and manners of American people during certain periods of time. They help in understanding how American life was shaped by great events such as the industrial revolution, the First World War, the Great Depression and the Second World War. Some were chosen because they deal with racial and class conflicts, which were common problems in the American society of the time covered by this study. Also, most of these novels portray not only adult life but adolescent life as well, and the post-secondary school students for whom the course is designed would find adolescence an exciting topic. Some of these novels have been chosen basically because the authors are American. Because blacks and whites constitute the two major racial groups in the population of the United States, some of the novels have been chosen because of the racial identity of their authors and thus for the particular perceptions and sensibilities this identity provides. Finally, all of these novels were selected because they are significant for their literary achievements.

The intention of this dissertation is to provide material which an instructor could use in an actual class. Therefore, the importance of the study depends on whether the material could be of significant

benefit to students in the proposed class. In fact, the course would be of benefit for a variety of reasons. First, because the American novel is not taught formally in most African post-secondary schools, this course is one way of introducing African students to the rich American novel. The course would also introduce those students to some of the people of the United States and to their lives during a certain period of time. Furthermore, the course will show that the novel, like most types of literature, while it deals with human beings placed in a specific environment identified by the literature, also reflects the universal tendencies of human nature and human concerns. Moreover, the novels depict the American people's "humanity," for example their capacity to love, to make mistakes or to cling to some ideal of life. This course would also develop an appreciation of the literary achievements of certain significant American writers of fiction. In addition, the critical skills fostered by the study of these novels would be useful in helping students understand and appreciate both other types of American literature and the literature of other countries.

The details above indicate that this dissertation is important to students for several reasons. Through the proposed course, students will learn that the canon of the novel constitutes a significant part of the American literary output. They will also be introduced to some of the techniques and other novelistic elements, such as themes, used in American fiction. Included among the techniques are characterization, plot, diction, dialogue, description, symbolism, parables, folklore, flashbacks and irony. Themes include racial and class conflict, the crisis of adolescence, sex, nostalgia, and urban life.

The study of the novels may stimulate students to read and enjoy the printed page and to cherish their own responses to what is read. Students may also learn to make more informed and sophisticated criticism of what they have read. An additional usefulness of this study lies in the fact that this course will help East African students to become more aware of, and perhaps more fully to understand, social, economic, political and cultural developments in the United States, at least as these are perceived by the novelists.

This course will provide opportunities for improvement of the reading skills of the students. That is, the course plan will allow the instructor to help students to develop certain literary skills--those required by efficient readers of fiction--including, for example, reading dialogue carefully, extracting meaning from description or understanding its function in fiction, and learning the function of setting as it relates to themes and tone. The instructors, of course, should be aware of the problems that students confront in learning to read novels and should shape their teaching to help students overcome them.

The course provides students an opportunity for a brief study of the nature, origin and history of the people of the United States. They will also study briefly the history of the American novel, as well as the major characteristics of all novelistic writing.

The dissertation is also significant because it demonstrates a way to employ an interdisciplinary instructional approach and shows the relevance and importance of such an approach to the understanding and appreciation of literature.

The scope, issues and limitations of this study must also be considered. Scope here refers to the breadth or extent of the study. The study outlines, explains and provides a basic bibliography relevant to, and a critical and historical discussion of, selected American novels published between 1900-1959 for a course to be taught in East Africa. Issues such as developments which shaped American fiction in the twentieth century and writers' responses to those developments are discussed. Also, significant literary movements from 1900 to 1940 are discussed, and there is a general bibliography of twentieth-century American fiction.

The fourth and fifth chapters survey published critical analyses of each of the novels. For each the following format is used: a biography of the author, followed by a discussion of the novel. For each novel, its historical setting, major themes, important techniques and critical reception are considered. Finally, a bibliography of secondary materials relevant to each novel is provided.

The methods of research, analysis and synthesis employed in the study may now be discussed. The actual research for this project began with the identification and assembling of both primary and secondary sources. The selected novels are the primary sources. In the reading of them, the focus was specifically on their content, themes and techniques. It seemed that this focus would permit discovery of how far these novels reflect salient aspects of American life as they were shaped by the great historical events of the period in which they were written.

Secondary sources include articles from various literary and professional journals whose titles appear in scholarly resources in the field of literature, such as the annual International Bibliography

published by the Modern Language Association of America. The articles used were usually critical, mainly making analyses and/or assessments of novels, and were published in journals such as Phylon, Commonweal, Book Review Digest, Independent, Critical Inquiry, Twentieth-Century Literature and College Language Association Journal. For biographical details concerning individual authors articles from encyclopedias were consulted. After completion of a bibliography, the potential secondary sources were read critically for the purpose of developing a general view of twentieth-century American fiction and its creators. Another major purpose for studying these materials was to discover how recognized scholars have interpreted the novels and how their views on crucial matters are similar or radically different.

The modern American novel, in its complicated techniques, often seems obscure to many readers without the help of authoritative analytical and critical studies. With such assistance, these novels can be clear and exciting. Such study, then, helped this author make judgments and draw conclusions regarding the style of and themes treated in the novels and those values with which they seem to be concerned, directly or by implication. The ideas gained from the reading of both primary and secondary sources permitted a synthesis to be achieved. Chapter one reviews the secondary materials used in this paper.

This introductory section has discussed the topic of "Eight Major Exemplars of the Twentieth Century American Novel, 1900-1959," including the significance of that subject and the methods of research employed in the dissertation. Chapter one is a review of literature related to the primary sources.

CHAPTER ONE: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter a review of related literature is provided; that is, secondary sources are treated. Major critical works used in this study will be discussed briefly and significant differences in the views of the critics will be noted. Books and articles of literary criticism and relevant theses and dissertations have been utilized in the study. The dissertation will be unique because all of the resources its author used helped shape it so that it responds directly and specifically to the special needs of the teachers for whom it is primarily intended.

In the twentieth century an incredible number of scholarly and critical studies of the modern American novel has been published. The following is a brief review of a limited number of those publications found most useful for this study.

In American Fiction 1920-1940 the critic Joseph Warren Beach asserts that the most important common feature of American fiction from 1920 to 1940 is that it was produced in the interval between two world wars, each of which was greater in scope than the wars following the French Revolution of 1789 and far more disastrous in its effect than the Napoleonic wars. Some of the American novelists of this time participated in these wars. For example, William Faulkner was a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force and Ernest Hemingway was a member of the Italian Arditi, to name but two. Beach adds that "the writings of the

American novelists reflect the effects of the First World War."¹ Hoffman shares this view. He also examines American novels of 1900-1950, and specifically considers the following topics: "...the works of Willa Cather and Ellen Glasgow and the influence of James upon each; the contribution made by Gertrude Stein to the art of those novels written after the First World War; the novelists of the 1920's, with detailed attention paid to the work of Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald; the two widely separated points of view in fiction of the 1930's, indicated under the heading 'Evidence and Rhetorical Purpose,' and, finally, a consideration of developments seen earlier in the century and the introduction of new or newly perfected skills and insights."² Hoffman's book is relevant to this study, especially because it examines most of the themes recurring in the novels in it. For example, in the discussion of "Prewar Naturalism, 1900-1915" the works of Theodore Dreiser are discussed at length. He says that through Sister Carrie Dreiser's moral interpretations are given in "pseudoscientific terms."³ Hoffman further says that according to naturalism man is a mere mechanism, not to be held responsible for his behavior because he is driven by vast inner and outer compulsions over which he has no control.

Also discussed in this book is the "American Novel Between the Wars." Two significant novelists whose works are of this category,

¹Joseph Warren Beach, American Fiction: 1920-1940 (New York: Russell and Russell, 1960), p.11.

²Frederick J. Hoffman, The Modern Novel in America: 1900-1950 (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951), p. vii.

³Ibid. p. 45.

Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald, are described at length. It asserts that it was not only the war itself that Hemingway had characterized in his works, but the postwar world as well. Hoffman says that the horror and boredom of the war were what the postwar generation wanted to discover for itself; they wished, moreover, to have accounts of the war not from the women of an earlier generation, but from men such as Hemingway, who had fought in or at least experienced the war. The war served as the background for all Hemingway's fiction in the 1920's, such as A Farewell to Arms and The Sun Also Rises, says Hoffman. He further asserts that Hemingway's fiction of the 1920's was a continuous reminder of the need to adjust to the complexity and violence of that world. In The Sun Also Rises, one of the texts chosen for analysis in this dissertation, the violence of the post-war generation is reflected in the form of bullfighting by one of its major characters. In that novel Hemingway employs bullfighting as part of the culture of Spain, a country he deeply loves, while taking fullest advantage of its qualities as a spectacle, a sport, a ritual and a link with the heroic Spanish past. Fishing, hiking, swimming and bicycle racing (all mentioned in the novel) cannot offer such a stimulus to his imagination, although the man Hemingway has relished all of them. Big-game hunting, of course, is not a ritual and is not available in Spain in any case. One would only add that only Pedro Romero must face violent death directly and regularly within the novel; the other leading characters do so (in 1925) only vicariously, through his performance in the bullring. Hoffman says that bullfighting has several advantages over every other sport (e.g., fishing) used by Hemingway in The Sun Also Rises; it involves the risk of death. In fact, the concept of death is

the basis for all of the actions of all Hemingway heroes. That is why the bullfighters, the wild game hunters, and the major characters in The Sun Also Rises are in constant confrontation with death.

Also discussed in the same chapter in Hoffman's book is The Great Gatsby (1925) by F. Scott Fitzgerald, also one of the novels selected for study in this paper. Fitzgerald's assessment of the generation after World War I includes not only the hypocrisy of that society, but also its gossip and moral collapse. Hoffman declares that Nick Carraway, the protagonist and first-person narrator of The Great Gatsby, lacks the affluence and prestige to become fully a part of the society of Tom and Daisy, and that the ultimate judgement on that society is, of course, the author's, despite his closeness to Carraway in many vital respects. Hoffman also discusses the symbolic organization of the novel and Fitzgerald's use of sharp images to achieve the effects of great fictional art. Another critic who similarly interprets The Great Gatsby is Richard Chase in The American Novel and its Tradition. Chase initially discusses the relation between the romance, or romance novel, and the novel proper. Using a limited number of novels for illustration, Chase assesses the significance of the fact that since its earliest days the American novel, in its more original and characteristic form, has worked out its own destiny.⁴ Like Hoffman, Chase also discusses The Great Gatsby. In their treatment of Fitzgerald's novel,

⁴Richard Chase, The American Novel and its Tradition (New York: Doubleday, 1957), p. 162.

Hoffman's and Chase's books are complementary and supplementary to each other. For example, while Gatsby is looked at as a novel of manners by Chase, he does not give attention to techniques employed in it. On the other hand, Douglas Taylor, as does Hoffman in The Modern Novel in America 1900-1950, discusses Fitzgerald's techniques in The Great Gatsby, saying that it has "elegance of prose style as well as a control of dramatic point of view."⁵

Some critical works contain numerous articles on certain novels included in this study. For example, Max Roger Westbrook, editing The Modern American Novel: Essays in Criticism, has collected some of the best interpretive articles by outstanding critics. Materials relevant to this study that are contained in this book include Westbrook's discussion in his introduction regarding Dreiser's commitment to a theme and technique called naturalism, which "according to standard sources is the belief that man is shaped by hereditary and environmental forces beyond his control."⁶ Westbrook's introduction also briefly alludes to the life of Dreiser:

As a young man he (Dreiser) washed dishes, shoveled coal, worked as a newspaper reporter, rejected college as being unrealistic; and yet, after writing Sister Carrie, his protest for a better understanding of the common man, he began working for pulp and slick magazines of a most unrealistic sort and made a good deal of money doing it. Late in his life, long after he had won his fight against narrowly moralistic

⁵Douglas Taylor, "The Great Gatsby: Style and Myth," in The Modern American Novel: Essays in Criticism, edited by Max Westbrook (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 59.

⁶Karl Beckson and Arthur Ganz, eds., A Reader's Guide to Literary Terms: A Dictionary (New York: The Noonday Press, 1960), p. 132.

censorship, he flirted pathetically with spiritualism and communism, revealing yet another side of his complex nature.⁷

A relevant article contained in Westbrook's book is entitled "Tristan or Jacob: The Choice of The Sun Also Rises," by Robert W. B. Lewis, Jr. It examines techniques, themes and style in this novel, concluding that it may be Hemingway's best: "The style of Hemingway is wonderfully controlled, there is no self-consciousness, no self-imitation, the characters are well-conceived and executed; and there is a feeling, if not the certainty, of multiple levels of meaning to the story. In short, the novel is an esthetic one."⁸

Another essay is by J. D. O'Hara: "J. D. Salinger, the Man and His Novel, The Catcher in the Rye." O'Hara praises Salinger, claiming that The Catcher in the Rye has been read more widely and discussed more thoroughly than any other contemporary novel; "Teenagers, professors, and professional critics alike express their admiration for it."⁹

Other critics who hold similar views include Harold C. Gardiner, editor of Fifty Years of the American Novel: A Christian Appraisal.¹⁰ This book is a collection of critical essays on various novels studied

⁷Max Westbrook, ed., Introduction to The Modern American Novel: Essays in Criticism (New York: Random House, Inc., 1966), p. 20.

⁸Robert W. B. Lewis, Jr. "Tristan or Jacob: The Choice of The Sun Also Rises" in The Modern American Novel: Essays in Criticism edited by Max Westbrook, p.92.

⁹J. D. O'Hara. "J. D. Salinger, the Man and His Novel, The Catcher in the Rye" in The Modern American Novel: Essays in Criticism edited by Max Westbrook, p. 211.

¹⁰Harold C. Gardiner, ed., Fifty Years of the American Novel: A Christian Appraisal, 1900-1950 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951).

in this paper. These include: Edward J. Drummond's "Theodore Dreiser: Shifting Naturalism," Riley Hughes' "F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Touch of Disaster," Ernest Sandeen's "William Faulkner: Tragedian of Yoknapatawpha," and Michael F. Moloney's "Ernest Hemingway: The Missing Third Dimension." In these essays the critics interpret the novels from a Christian point of view. They achieve this by showing that the characters portrayed in these novels are men and women endowed with human nature and that human nature has within it the power to win consideration, esteem, sympathy, tolerance, understanding--in one word, charity. Carl Van Doren, in Contemporary American Novelists: 1900-1920, gives an introduction to a record of the national creative imagination as exhibited in the progress of native fiction, using for illustration novelists such as James Fenimore Cooper, Herman Melville, William Dean Howells, Mark Twain, Henry James and Francis Marion Crawford. This critical work is relevant to this paper because, among other matters, it discusses Dreiser the man and his novels.

Van Doren discusses Dreiser in detail, criticizing him for lack of "a faculty for sustained argument"¹¹ in Sister Carrie. Despite his negative comments about Dreiser's developing his characters, he says that "Mr. Dreiser's work comes from the conflict within him of huge, expansive moods and a conscience working hard to be accurate in its representation of the most honest facts of manners and characters."¹² Van Doren further asserts that Dreiser carries wherever he goes the

¹¹Carl Van Doren, Contemporary American Novelists: 1900-1920, Vol. 3 (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1923), p. 74.

¹²Ibid., p. 81.

"true peasant simplicity of outlook, speaks with the peasant's bold frankness, and suffers a peasant confusion in the face of complexity."¹³ He adds that Dreiser speaks bluntly even upon the more subtle and intricate themes--finance, sex, and art--which interest him above all others. On the whole, says Van Doren, Dreiser probably succeeds best with his treatment of the theme of finance.

Examining the theme of sex in Sister Carrie and Jennie Gerhardt, both of which are stories of women who fall as easily as "Cowperwood's"¹⁴ mistresses into the hands of the conquering male, Van Doren asserts:

Sex in them is a free-flowing expanding energy, working resistlessly through all human tissue, knowing in itself neither good nor evil, habitually at war with the rules and taboos which have been devised by mankind to hold its amative impulses within convenient bounds. To the cosmic philosopher what does it matter whether this or that human female, or whether the mating endures beyond the passionate moment?¹⁵

Besides the above-cited critical works, the anthology entitled American Literature: The Makers and the Making, edited by Brooks, Lewis, and Warren,¹⁶ also was used in this paper. In addition to its collection of short stories and poetry, excerpts from some novels and some critical comments on these selections are included in it. It is

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴"Cowperwood" refers to Dreiser's novels, namely: The Financier (1912), The Titan (1914) and The Stoic (1947) which were posthumously published in 1947 in The Cowperwood Trilogy.

¹⁵Carl Van Doren, Contemporary American Novelists 1900-1920, p. 79.

¹⁶Cleanth Brooks, R. W. B. Lewis and Robert Penn Warren, eds., American Literature: The Makers and the Making (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973).

relevant to this study because it provides biographical information on Fitzgerald and Hemingway and some critical comments on their novels used in the study.

The literature reviewed above gives a general idea of the twentieth-century American novel. In the following section, a review of the literature on each of the novels selected for study in this paper will be provided. Critical works on individual novels are numerous. Important works by each of the authors will also be cited. First is a review of the literature on Theodore Dreiser.

Selected books and articles on Dreiser are discussed here for specific reasons. Some were chosen because they contain biographical information, others because they discuss some of Dreiser's important ideas. The majority were included because they interpret Sister Carrie, one of the principal novels studied in this paper, from various angles.

Some of the critical works speak favorably of Dreiser the man and positively evaluate his works, especially Sister Carrie. One of these is Charlotte A. Alexander's Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie, which includes biographical information. It also says that there are autobiographical details in Dreiser's works: "Many of the aspects and episodes of Sister Carrie (as well as of his other fiction) can be considered autobiographical, from the midwestern heroine and her two lovers (associated with exactly similar incidents in the lives of Dreiser's sisters, for example) to the streetcar strike, which resembles

one covered by the author while he worked for the Toledo Blade."¹⁷ She further says that historical background of the time in which Dreiser wrote is reflected in some of his novels, including Sister Carrie: "It is very clear, ... that ... his novels provide a carefully detailed, often almost documented picture of his own American society, as he saw it. It was as if he felt the pressure, the responsibility--perhaps because of his many and varied youthful experiences--to expose a new and rather monstrous American society which founds its gigantic, sprawling expression around 1900 and thereafter."¹⁸ This book also gives a detailed summary of Sister Carrie. Alexander declares that one reason this novel is important is that it portrays most of the salient aspects of American life at the time in which it was written. She says also that one of the major themes established in Sister Carrie is that of materialism, the impact and influence of money and the power which comes with money. To the have-nots (that is, the poor) of any period, the power of money and material things cannot be overestimated. Alexander declares that also developed in Sister Carrie is the idea of the city itself and its conditions, especially the contrast of the conditions of the rich and the poor and the exploitation of workers by industry owners. The conditions of the city also shape the way individuals behave: "To Dreiser--and to a number of his contemporaries: Thomas Hardy in England, Frank Norris in America--the city (or rather, rapid industrialization of our civilization accompanied by exploitation of

¹⁷Charlotte A. Alexander, Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie (New York: Monarch Press, Inc. 1965), pp. 6-7.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 7.

workers through long hours and low wages) came to represent the large part environment plays in shaping of individual destinies."¹⁹

Theodore Dreiser: A New Dimension, by Marguerite Tjader, views him as a challenging and controversial figure.²⁰ Dreiser's impact on people, as both a writer and a human being, was tremendous, says Tjader. She also provides some biographical information regarding Dreiser, especially about his travels. Dreiser's visits to France and Spain and to New York, as well as his closing years in California, are mentioned. Regarding New York, Dreiser did not merely visit there; he lived there for over twenty years before settling in Hollywood, notes Tjader.

Donald Pizer's The Novels of Theodore Dreiser: A Critical Study discusses different novels in separate chapters. The book has two major aims--"to establish the facts of the sources and composition of each of Dreiser's novels and to study the themes and form of the completed work."²¹ The first chapter examines Sister Carrie. The author first looks at the general and specific sources of Sister Carrie, saying that scholars have noted that Dreiser drew closely upon the experiences of his sister Emma and her lover, L. A. Hopkins, for his account of Carrie and Hurstwood in Chicago. A portion of this chapter traces the life of Emma and Hopkins in New York, which is parallel to that of the

¹⁹Ibid., p. 12.

²⁰Marguerite Tjader, Theodore Dreiser: A New Dimension (Norwalk, Connecticut: Silvermine Publishers, Inc., 1965), p. 1.

²¹Donald Pizer, The Novels of Theodore Dreiser: A Critical Study (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), p. 3.

protagonists Carrie and Hurstwood while they also were in New York. This is followed by a discussion of the characterization of Carrie and Hurstwood. The author then discusses the major themes and techniques in Sister Carrie. One of the themes is Carrie's life, says Pizer. The city is tempter and seducer; it is a symbol of experience, and to the innocent it symbolizes above all the wonder of experience, of life, which lies before them. Another theme is the moral question regarding Carrie's promiscuity. Pizer says that in treating Carrie's relationship to Drouet, "Dreiser attempts to free Carrie from moral responsibility for her action. Going to live with Drouet--that is, sexual immorality--is not the 'way of nature.' Dreiser implies that someday, when evolution has progressed further, the 'distant pole of truth' will unwaveringly guide man, and the unmistakable implication is that they will not guide him toward sexual promiscuity."²² Pizer further notes that in Sister Carrie is discussed the theme of a "composite of various beliefs about success, art, and happiness which Dreiser had encountered during the previous few years. First, Ames' values reflect the notion of success which Dreiser had expressed to him again and again in his interviews with various great men for Success magazine during 1898-99. Material success, these figures had told him, was less important than spiritual peace and happiness, and these states could best be achieved by the use of one's wealth or position or talent to aid others."²³ Pizer also finds that Dreiser in Sister Carrie treats the theme of

²²Ibid., p. 57.

²³Ibid., p. 65.

class, noting that "class labels were not as firmly set at the turn of the century as they are today, and it is clear that in *Hurstwood* Dreiser is characterizing above all a particular kind of middle-class figure."²⁴ However, he seems to suggest that what is important in the novel lies not so much in themes as in techniques. In *Sister Carrie* there is a detailed dramatization of the actualities of Carrie Meeber's life as a young girl in the city. In this novel, symbolism, for example, "characterization of the city as tempter and seducer,"²⁵ is one of the techniques used. Also, Dreiser's extensive use of imagery, third-person omniscient narrator and tonality are other techniques employed in *Sister Carrie*. Dreiser's images and symbols resemble his authorial voices, in that they vary from those imposed upon the character (parallel to his philosophical comments) to those which arise implicitly out of the narrative (parallel to his descriptive passages). Metaphors are also used to portray Carrie. However, the author comments that "Dreiser is much more successful as a symbolic than as a metaphoric writer."²⁶ This is evidenced, for example, when clothes are used as a symbol--"clothes are used as an index of taste and social position or class."²⁷ Dreiser also uses vignettes. Pizer says that the "vignettes are used in part as an adaptation of the nineteenth-century convention of an authorial summing up of the fates of the principal

²⁴Ibid., p. 90.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., p. 91.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 91-92.

characters in a novel. But they are also dramatic scenes which contain the dominant symbolic motifs of the novel, motifs which rise to a finely orchestrated finale. The search for comfort, pleasure, social position, and love has been, for each of the major figures in the vignettes, a search for warmth."²⁸ Finally, Dreiser uses the epilogue. It is one "characteristic of his art: an inept attempt to sum up his portrayal of Carrie. His four concluding vignettes are another moving and complex representation, through scene and symbol, of the principal themes of the novel."²⁹

Dreiser: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by John Lydenberg, assembles various articles on different works of that author. The introduction briefly details Dreiser's life-history. According to Lydenberg, Dreiser did not set out to be an artist and never saw himself as one. He was for eight years a journalist, a successful and distinguished newspaper man, an editor, a writer of success stories for popular magazines. Then, after a few dilatory attempts at short stories, he wrote his first novel, almost by chance, at the urging of a friend. When Sister Carrie failed to catch on he went through a period of depression, but soon returned to hack-writing and then to increasing success and prominence as an editor. Dreiser has been traditionally, and quite properly, categorized as a literary naturalist. This means that "he described a jungle world of unceasing, meaningless struggle in which the strong survived and the weak were

²⁸Ibid., p. 95.

²⁹Ibid.

crushed."³⁰ However, Lydenberg declares that "Although his novels are important for their depiction of the crude realities of American life, their true strength comes from qualities not usually associated with naturalism. They are filled with Dreiser's pity and compassion, saturated with his brooding sense of what he liked to call 'the mystery and terror and wonder of life,' and continually asking why, why, why? In many ways, the essential Dreiser is like the American transcendentalist--a kinship Dreiser recognized late in life when he edited a volume of selections from Thoreau. His novels were but projections of himself; they grew out of him."³¹

Theodore Dreiser: The Critical Reception, edited by Jack Salzmnn,³² contains various reviews from newspapers and journals on various works by Dreiser. It includes about seventy reviews of Sister Carrie published between 1900 and 1907. Most of them praise the novel for its realism, for its truthfulness and for the frankness of its portrayal of a widespread type: the good-natured, yielding, pleasure-loving type of woman, not emotional, not capable of deep feeling. She finds it easiest to accept the good things of life as they offer themselves. Most of the reviewers concur that Sister Carrie is not an immoral story because it teaches the truth as Dreiser experienced it. Most of the articles also state that its "portrayal of the sinking of

³⁰John Lydenberg, ed., Introduction to Dreiser: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1971), p. 2.

³¹Ibid.

³²Jack Salzmnn, ed., Theodore Dreiser: The Critical Reception (New York: David Lewis, Inc., 1972).

the once prosperous manager (Hurstwood) into a listless seeker for work, a penniless beggar living on the various charities of New York, and his final horrible end, is powerfully presented."³³

Not all of the review articles praise Sister Carrie. One appearing in the Akron (Ohio) Journal, November 30, 1907, condemns the novel, saying: "The embellishments are undoubtedly calculated to deceive the public into reading what is between the covers. The book is a dangerous one, the story of lives steeped in sin and degradation. There is not one sentence to redeem the sordid tale of the sickening life of men and women who pass before the public eye as honored members of society. All that is low in the theatrical life has been raked up and put into this story. The whole thing is immoral and disgusting. Such books are to be shunned, and it is to be deplored that publishers will accept this kind of work."³⁴

Another negative review appeared in Paris Modes, September 1907. It says that:

Sister Carrie has received some praise and much condemnation, but it is certainly not a pleasant book to read. Why a sordid, selfish, uneducated mite of a girl, whose overweening vanity makes her an easy prey to the schemes of certain low-minded men, and who would rather live in sinful luxury, if fine raiment is hers, than engage in any sort of independent toil, should be considered a suitable subject for a lengthy novel passes comprehension. From the feminine standpoint the girl is not even interesting and her story is immoral and inane. Can anyone explain why such a story--calculated to be harmful in the hands of the young--should ever have been deemed a worthy motif? It may be "relentless truth," but why tell it?³⁵

³³Edna Kenton, Review of Sister Carrie in *ibid.*, p. 7.

³⁴Review of Sister Carrie by an unnamed author in Akron (Ohio) Journal, November 30, 1907, reprinted in *Ibid.*, p. 53.

³⁵Anonymous, *Ibid.*, p. 50.

Jack Salzmänn declares that condemnation of Sister Carrie on moral grounds had been inimical to its publication. The Doubleday Doran publishing firm agreed to publish it in 1900, but Frank Doubleday, urged on by his wife, desired to violate his contract with the author. Deeply resentful, and certain of the worth of his work, Dreiser threatened legal proceedings. Consequently, the contract was fulfilled, but only with extreme reluctance: "When Dreiser decided to contest the firm's decision, a formal "Memorandum of Agreement" was signed and Sister Carrie was published on November 8, 1900. Only in 1907 was Sister Carrie published in an attractive format and widely reviewed."³⁶

Salzmänn further points out that the reviews which Sister Carrie received in Great Britain were not unlike those which it received in the United States. There some reviewers (the one for the Liverpool Daily Post, September 11, 1901, for example) found that "although its cleverness is undeniable, Sister Carrie leaves a somewhat objectionable impression on the mind."³⁷

Like most of Dreiser's other work, Sister Carrie depicts various realistic themes of the time. In "Sister Carrie and the Problem of Literary Naturalism" the Japanese critic Yoshinobu Hakutani discusses Dreiser's obvious adherence to the deterministic view of the human condition. According to Hakutani, this theory states "that man is an animal subject to no human law but only the law of his own instinct,

³⁶Salzmänn, "Introduction," Ibid., p. xvii.

³⁷Ibid., p. xix.

behaving as he desires, controlled only by natural forces. According to this theory, the male of the species is characterized by his greed for material gains and his desire for the opposite sex. The female, then, is the weaker, vain, pleasure-seeking creature who cannot resist the flattery of the male."³⁸ Hakutani also says that most scholars generally agree that in the United States naturalism came of age in the writings of Dreiser, with Sister Carrie being a fairly typical work of the movement. Materialism and class consciousness are, according to Hakutani, two of the themes in Sister Carrie. Hurstwood steals money from his employer to use to flee with Carrie. In this case, by dramatizing man's virtual helplessness when strength of will is most needed, "Dreiser created a sense of the superb irony of the fate of man."³⁹ Hakutani goes on to say that in this instance "Dreiser is emphasizing the effect of a mysterious combination of subconscious direction and chance which often determines man's fate. Sister Carrie thus seems to demonstrate Dreiser's rigid adherence to the deterministic philosophy, which is the most important characteristic of French literary naturalism as practiced by Emile Zola."⁴⁰

In an article entitled "Sister Carrie's Popular Economy" Walter Ben Michaels discusses the major themes in the novel. One theme is the relevance of money to people. Michaels indicates that there are places

³⁸Yoshinobu Hakutani, "Sister Carrie and the Problem of Literary Naturalism" in Twentieth-Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal, 13(April 1967):3.

³⁹Ibid., p. 7.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 9.

where and when money is indispensable, that is, in an urban setting. He also indicates that there are places where money is of no use, for example, on an island. He views money as power as portrayed in Sister Carrie; that is to say, within Carrie Meeber's world money is both power and pleasure. The critic finds that another theme is art as a model of life, since the heroine becomes both a dancer and an actress in the theater. Michaels then says that the effect of all art on Carrie is "to arouse in her 'longings' for those things which she did not have. And if, in Carrie's popular economy, these 'longings' are themselves money (currency and commodity both), then the theatre is indeed a gold mine, and the economic function of art is the production of desire."⁴¹

Michaels also thinks that "Art is portrayed in Sister Carrie as a model; whereas realism imitates life, painting life as it is, the sentimental novel, presenting itself as a model, seduces its readers into lives lived in imitation."⁴²

Finally, Loren Francis Schmidtberger, in a dissertation entitled "The Structure of the Novels of Theodore Dreiser," asserts that "criticism of Dreiser has generally concentrated on his naturalism rather than on his literary techniques. My analysis of the structure of the novels, especially the inherent relationships between motives, circumstances, and choices whereby Dreiser moves his characters along to

⁴¹Walter Ben Michaels, "Sister Carrie's Popular Economy" in Critical Inquiry, 7(Winter 1980):385.

⁴²Ibid.

their destinies, reveals that his creative imagination transcended his naturalistic beliefs."⁴³

In examining Sister Carrie, Schmidtberger looks mainly at two characters, Carrie Meeber and George Hurstwood. He says that: "In Sister Carrie (1900) Hurstwood's fall and Carrie's rise are structured to exclude explanations of success and failure. Though human volition is discounted as the cause of success or failure, it is not discounted in the cause-sequence of the plot. Hurstwood's elaborately planned actions lead to a crucial choice which he makes while his judgement is in error, and which produces unforeseen and unmerited disaster, while Carrie's uniformed choices produce unforeseen and unmerited success."⁴⁴

In addition to a survey of published books, articles, reviews and a dissertation on Theodore Dreiser and Sister Carrie, attention will be given to theses on Dreiser which have been written by Atlanta University students. The Atlanta University theses specifically address Sister Carrie, but in certain instances they also include information on Dreiser's life history.

Four Atlanta University theses are included. One of these is Ernestine Campbell's, entitled "Dreiser as a Critic of American Political and Economic Life" (1947). The first chapter, "Dreiser the Man," is biographical and concludes that the force of Dreiser's personal life and environment had tremendous influence upon him as man and

⁴³Loren Francis Schmidtberger, "The Structure of the Novels of Theodore Dreiser" (Ph.D. dissertation, Fordham University, 1965), p. 1.

⁴⁴Ibid.

writer. She also says that the literature which Dreiser read, such as works by Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, Balzac and Zola, greatly influenced him.

Campbell discusses the political-economic situation in America as described in various novels by Dreiser, including Sister Carrie. She says that in this novel, for example, a scene on a street during a railway strike brings out the general dissatisfaction as to the hours of labor required for motormen and the wages paid them, thus showing the poverty prevalent and working conditions among the lower classes. Thus Dreiser charged that the economic life of America was, for the laboring class, riddled with injustices and inequities. Campbell also asserts that the novel examines the influence of environment in shaping human life and actions. For example, Carrie Meeber is a poor girl whose poverty influences her to become the mistress of a young salesman. Finally she is duped into an illegitimate marriage with a saloon-keeper, George Hurstwood, whom she abandons, and then wins success on the stage. But the direct cause of Carrie's actions is environment. As Dreiser describes her, she is "a work-seeker, an outcast without employment, one whom the average employer could tell at a glance was poor and in need of a situation."⁴⁵ And she chose the easy path to security. Campbell concludes that, through Dreiser's description of the corruptness of an era in Sister Carrie, he raises such questions as: Are the political leaders in the American government acting in the best interest of the people today? Is life today in America hampered by the

⁴⁵Theodore Dreiser, Sister Carrie (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1900), p. 26.

lure of material gain? Is there an influence exerted by the environment in shaping human life and actions?

Another thesis is by Alvia Louise Washington Randall (1968), entitled "Dreiser's Women." It is divided into three chapters. The first discusses the "Types of Women in Dreiser's Novels," the second "The Role of Women in Dreiser's Novels" and the final chapter explores "The Significance of Dreiser's Treatment of Women." This thesis looks at the era into which Dreiser was born and the decades during which he grew up and how they influenced his portrayal of women in his fiction. She says that the end of the nineteenth century was an era of change characterized by the transition from a predominantly rural system to an industrial economy based on capital and labor. The collaboration between these two factors, uneasy as it was, led to America's rise as a leading power whose strength was to be demonstrated and increased in two subsequent world wars. Dreiser's women came from three distinct social strata: aristocratic, upper-middle class and lower-middle class. Carrie Meeber rises from a poor class to a rich middle class. Randall says that at first glance Carrie seems shallow and dull, both unintellectual and incapable of deep feeling. However, by the end of the novel Carrie's dimensions are increased by her talent, by her good nature and by the tragic flaw in her character.

Another thesis, entitled "Naturalism in the Novels of Theodore Dreiser" (1964), by Carolyn Frazier Blakely, traces the development of Dreiser's naturalism through five of his novels. Blakely explains how in three distinct stages Dreiser took three different attitudes. In chapter one she treats Dreiser's first novels, Sister Carrie (1900) and Jennie Gerhardt (1911), in an effort to show that in the first stage of

his naturalism Dreiser was expounding his conviction of the purposelessness of life and attacking the conventional ethical codes, which to him seemed to hold men to standards of conduct that had no basis in fact, while they condemned others without regard to what Dreiser thought might be the real merits of their situations. In conclusion, Blakely asserts that Dreiser's aim, it appears, was to present with realism the whole of the lives of his characters, and in this respect he was one of the first American novelists to portray men and women undergoing the hazards of earning a living under industrialism.

The fourth thesis is entitled: "Theodore Dreiser's Attitude Toward Morality and American Society in Five Major Novels" (1974), by Ernestine Steiner. She discusses Sister Carrie, Jennie Gerhardt, The Financier, The Titan, and An American Tragedy. Steiner endeavors to show that in these novels Dreiser presents the same theme. That is, an individual is moved by animal appetites and instincts, but because he acts contrary to established moral codes he is not necessarily immoral. Steiner also says that Dreiser feels that, given certain hereditary and environmental conditions, an individual will act according to the dictates of his needs and his desires.

In each of the novels studied, says Steiner, Dreiser's major characters become victims of their conditions and their environment. To better their economic conditions they defy society's established moral codes and, as a result, are labeled immoral and are cast off from the society to which they yearn to belong. In the final analysis, Dreiser's characters act as they do because they have no alternatives; society forces them to do so. Since Dreiser is anti-society, he exonerates his characters and names society the guilty party, concludes Steiner.

Thus, in the four theses all the major themes in Dreiser's novels are presented. Naturalism, or the attempt to apply scientific theory and methods to imaginative writing, is also discussed. Most of the critical works credit Sister Carrie for its realism, its truthfulness in presenting the socio-political and economic situation of the people in the United States of America. Only a very few critics assert that Sister Carrie is immoral.

F. Scott Fitzgerald is another of the authors included in the projected course, and a review of the literature about him will be undertaken in the following section. Various critical books provide detailed biographical information and a literary assessment of Fitzgerald. These include: F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Man and His Works, edited by Alfred Kazin, The Apprentice Fiction of F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1909-1917, edited by John Kuehl, and F. Scott Fitzgerald, edited by Charles E. Shain. Kazin credits Fitzgerald for "his creative imagination in his novels such as This Side of Paradise, The Great Gatsby, Tender is the Night and, finally, The Last Tycoon."⁴⁶

The critics also refer to Fitzgerald's first attempts at novel-writing. They agree that while he was a student at Princeton University, which he left in his senior year (1917) to join the army, as one of them says, "he completed the first of three versions of This Side of Paradise. This version appears to have contained almost nothing of what

⁴⁶Alfred Kazin, ed., F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Man and His Works (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1951), p. 14.

is in the final version except the early scenes of Amory's arrival at Princeton."⁴⁷

Other critical works on Fitzgerald discuss art, technique, texture and characterization in The Great Gatsby. They show how Fitzgerald reflects and/or criticizes American society of the 1920's. For example, James E. Miller, in F. Scott Fitzgerald: His Art and His Techniques, studies Fitzgerald's ideas and techniques in his major novels. Miller asserts that Fitzgerald uses fantastic satire, melodrama and the first-person narrator to tell effectively the story of The Great Gatsby. Most of the critical books used, including John F. Callahan, The Illusions of a Nation: Myth and History in the Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald;⁴⁸ Kenneth E. Eble, editor, F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Collection of Criticism;⁴⁹ Milton Hindus, F. Scott Fitzgerald: An Introduction and Interpretation;⁵⁰ Ernest Lockridge, Twentieth-Century Interpretations of The Great Gatsby;⁵¹ and Milton R. Stern, The Golden Moment: The Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald,⁵² share ideas similar to the above. Eble adds

⁴⁷Arthur Mizener, "F. Scott Fitzgerald 1896-1940," in *ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

⁴⁸John F. Callahan, The Illusions of a Nation: Myth and History in the Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972).

⁴⁹Kenneth E. Eble, F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Collection of Criticism (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1963).

⁵⁰Milton Hindus, F. Scott Fitzgerald: An Introduction and Interpretation (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968).

⁵¹Ernest Lockridge, ed., Twentieth-Century Interpretations of The Great Gatsby: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968).

⁵²Milton R. Stern, The Golden Moment: The Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970).

that Fitzgerald's literary achievements rest on a body of work--novels, short stories, and essays--distinguished for style, craftsmanship, honesty, and strength of vision. Milton Hindus declares that Fitzgerald is one of the finest writers that has ever lived. In analyzing The Great Gatsby, he asserts that Fitzgerald has powerfully succeeded in capturing and giving form to his impressions of a vast and chaotic world. Commenting on Fitzgerald's use of the first-person narrator in that novel, Hindus says that Carraway is one of Fitzgerald's happier inventions. It is Carraway who sets the moral tone of the story, and he gives to it its unity and meaning, says Hindus. Stern, in The Golden Moment: The Novels of Scott Fitzgerald, exploring Fitzgerald's attempts to work out the meanings of his life in his writings, offers extensive analyses of This Side of Paradise, The Beautiful and Damned and The Great Gatsby. He organizes the growth, development, and meaning of these novels from a single point of view, holding that the uses of history (since the Civil War and particularly since World War I), the American identity, and the moral reconstruction of the American past were at the center of Fitzgerald's imagination.⁵³

Also relevant to this bibliography are reviews of The Great Gatsby in journals such as Bookman, Harvard Business Review and Literary Review of the New York Evening Post. Most of them discuss the themes, the techniques and the story of the novel.⁵⁴ Most praise it for its

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴See, for example, C. R. Walker, review of The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald, in Bookman 61(June 1925):496.

powerful techniques and great ideas. One review says: "The Great Gatsby is a strange combination of satire, burlesque, fantasy, and melodrama. It is Fitzgerald writing with his old gusto, with driving imagination, and with a sense of the futility of life and of the constant presence of bootleggers."⁵⁵ Another reviewer commented that the plot is organized on tragedy: "The plot works out not like a puzzle, with odd bits falling into place, but like a tragedy, with every part functioning in the completed organism. I cannot find in the earlier Fitzgerald the artistic integrity and the passionate feeling which this book possesses."⁵⁶ Some reviews of The Great Gatsby praise it for its thoughtful contents and its powerful techniques. "The novel is one that refuses to be ignored. I finished it in an evening, and had to. Its spirited tempo, the motley of its figures, the suppressed, undersurface tension of its dramatic moments, held me to the page. It is not a book which might, under any interpretation, fall into the category of those doomed to investigation by a vice commission, and yet it is a shocking book--one that reveals incredible grossness, thoughtlessness, polite corruption, without leaving the reader with a sense of depression, without being insidiously provocative."⁵⁷ Similarly, another review by an unnamed critic in Outlook says that the virtue of The Great Gatsby lies in its "painstaking, often exquisite, workmanship and its

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Gilbert Seldes, review of The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald, in Dial 179 (August 1925): 162.

⁵⁷Walter Yust, review of The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald, in Literary Review (May 2, 1925):3.

humor."⁵⁸ Unlike the above reviews, this one, however, is partially negative. For example, the reviewer claims that "The Great Gatsby is not a good book."⁵⁹

The article by Peter Lisca is important in this study because it discusses the function of Nick Carraway as the first-person narrator in the novel. Lisca suggests that Nick's sentiments are bourgeois, but that it is important to establish the full extent of his commitment to these sentiments, for Nick is a paradigm of order and decorum. Lisca further says that as Nick continues to narrate the story he seems to take every opportunity to display his large "sense of the fundamental decencies," which resolve themselves into good manners, good taste and orderliness. Lisca concludes by suggesting that "the meaning of the novel does not lie in Nick Carraway nor in the opposite of what he stands for, but merely includes Nick and his judgements as parts of the novel; and Nick is restored to his important role as narrator. By tending to slight this role and exaggerate his function as moral fulcrum, criticism has obscured the technical brilliance of The Great Gatsby and encouraged essential misunderstandings about the novel's theme and Fitzgerald's moral imagination."⁶⁰

Another article on The Great Gatsby is by Robert Emmet Long, who relates it to the tradition of Joseph Conrad.⁶¹ He suggests that

⁵⁸Anonymous, review of The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald, in Outlook 140(July 1, 1925):341.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Peter Lisca, "Nick Carraway as the Imagery of Disorder," in Twentieth-Century Literature, A Scholarly and Critical Journal 13(April 1967):27.

⁶¹Robert Emmet Long, "The Great Gatsby and the Tradition of Joseph Conrad" in Texas Studies in Literature and Language: A Journal of the Humanities 8(Fall 1966).

Fitzgerald's book represents an extension into American literature of European tradition--a tradition which has been concerned above all with the subject of romantic illusion and with the problem of aesthetic form in the novel. Against the background of the Conrad tradition The Great Gatsby takes on its distinctive character as a work of art, while at the same time it becomes coherent in presenting the continuity of culture.

Two Atlanta University theses have also been used in interpretation of Fitzgerald and his novel. That Fitzgerald's life is inextricably bound up with and into his fiction is an idea pursued in her thesis by Angela M. Culmer. Culmer says that, unlike other writers of the twenties who attempted to objectify society through sociological analysis, Fitzgerald saw in himself those aspects which could be paralleled with aspects of the entire nation. For this reason, says Culmer, autobiography in his work is both aesthetically and culturally valuable. Culmer further asserts: "Through implementation of his knowledge--what he himself had, either directly or vicariously, experienced in America--Fitzgerald dramatized life itself. Because he concentrated on personal experience as a microcosm of national experience, his work--while obviously autobiographical--transcends the personal, and becomes a dramatic symbol of human cultural reality. His experiences were a vital part of the development of society, as they were a part of the development of Fitzgerald as a writer and as a man."⁶²

⁶²Angela M. Culmer, "Fitzgerald and the Phantasmagoric: Gatsby's Creator in Hollywood" (Master's thesis, Atlanta University, 1975), pp. 1-2.

On Fitzgerald as a spokesman for his age and on the political, economic, social and moral conditions which prevailed in America during the 1920's, the thesis by Fera Kornegay Hill entitled "Francis Scott Fitzgerald, A Chronicler of an Era" is informative. This thesis also shows how Fitzgerald's most important novels reflect the era in which they were written. For example, they reflect the fact that social manners and morality in American society of the 1920's were inevitably affected by power and wealth. As Hill puts it: "According to Fitzgerald the moralist, the central moral problem of American life was raised in acute form among the rich, in the conflict between the possibilities of their life and their insensitivity. He saw the rich and successful as the only people in the world with the opportunity to lead the good life. In the process of trying to become a heroic member of their community, he came to know them exceedingly well."⁶³ Indeed, in The Great Gatsby, speaking of the wealthy Tom and Daisy, Fitzgerald has Nick say to Gatsby: "'They're a rotten crowd,' I shouted across the lawn. 'You're worth the whole damn bunch put together.'"⁶⁴ Hill also notes Carraway as saying that the rich Buchanans were indiscreet and "careless people, that they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was

⁶³Fera Kornegay Hill, "Francis Scott Fitzgerald, A Chronicler of an Era" (Master's thesis, Atlanta University, 1963), pp. 24-25.

⁶⁴F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), p. 154. All subsequent page numbers refer to this text unless otherwise stated.

that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made." (pp. 180-181)

Hill says that Fitzgerald had come at last to identify the rich with evil. He had once thought them life's romance, but later he saw them as representing the consequences of a loss of integrity owing to the materialism of the 1920's. In other words, according to Hill, for Fitzgerald the rich represented a very definite moral failure; this is vividly illustrated in The Great Gatsby through his portrayal of the wealthy Buchanans. Hill declares that Fitzgerald sees Tom Buchanan as wealth brutalized by selfishness and arrogance; he looks for a mistress in the valley of ashes and finds an ignorant woman, Myrtle Wilson, whose raw vitality is like his own. Daisy Fay Buchanan, says Hill, is the spirit of wealth and offers a continual promise; however, it is a false promise, since at heart she is as self-centered as Tom, and even colder.

Ernest Hemingway is another of the authors studied in this paper. A review of the literature about him comprises the following section. For understanding themes, places, facts, scenes and the reflection of the 1920's in the United States of America, as found in Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises, three critical works are essential, namely: Carlos Baker, Hemingway: The Writer as Artist;⁶⁵ Baker, Ernest Hemingway: Critiques of Four Major Novels⁶⁶ and Philip Young, Ernest Hemingway.

⁶⁵Carlos Baker, Hemingway: The Writer as Artist (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956).

⁶⁶Id., ed. Ernest Hemingway: Critiques of Four Major Novels (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962).

In Hemingway: The Writer as Artist Baker gives an account of Hemingway's expatriate beginnings on the continent of Europe during the period 1920-1925. The emphasis in his book is on the literary activities of Hemingway in the post-war years, which included obtaining his education and writing his first novel, The Sun Also Rises. In Ernest Hemingway Young says that the novelist reflects the American life of the 1920's, especially as portrayed through the character of Jake Barnes of The Sun Also Rises. Jake was an American newspaperman in Paris who had fought with the Italians during the First World War. His own private tragedy was a war wound which made him impotent. Jake tries to cope with both the memories of the war and the memories of a frustrated romance with an English volunteer nurse, Lady Brett Ashley. Brett's husband, a mentally ill victim of the disasters of World War I, is a patient in England and will probably never fully regain the use of his faculties.

In order not to think too much about himself, Jake spends his time listening to the troubles of his friends and drinking heavily. When he grows tired of Paris, he goes on fishing trips to the Basque country or to Spain for the bullfights. Regarding Jake, Young says:

Jake Barnes was emasculated in the war. But he is the same man, a grown Nick Adams (Nick Adams refers to the first protagonist of Hemingway). He is a youth much like the young Hemingway, who grows up in northern Michigan, learns the cruel facts of life, goes to war, is wounded, comes home but adjusts, likes to hunt and fish, but has bad dreams because of the horrors he has seen, and again the actual injury functions as concrete evidence that the hero is a casualty. He is a writer living in Paris in the twenties as, for example, Harry was. When things are at their worst for him, like Fraser he cries in the night. When he refuses the services of a prostitute and she asks, "What's the matter? You sick?" he is not thinking of his impotence alone when he answers, "Yes." He is the insomniac as before, and for the same reasons: "I blew out the lamp. Perhaps I would be able to sleep. My head started to work. The old grievance." In addition, Jake, like

Nick, is the protagonist who has broken with society and with the usual middle class ways; and, again, he has made the break in connection with his wounding. He has very little use for most people. At times he has little use for himself. He exists on a fringe of the society he has renounced. Jake complains very little, although he suffers a good deal; there are certain things that are "done" and many that are not done.⁶⁷

Thus Young tells us that in The Sun Also Rises Hemingway shows that the effects of World War I are deadly. In Ernest Hemingway: Critiques of Four Major Novels, Baker discusses the techniques and content of four of Hemingway's novels, including The Sun Also Rises. He says that this novel is superbly told and that Hemingway is essentially an imaginative writer, as evidenced by this novel. For analysis of the themes, structure, style, symbolism and irony in The Sun Also Rises, four critical books are significant: Carlos Baker, Hemingway: The Writer as Artist, Arthur Waldhorn, A Reader's Guide to Ernest Hemingway,⁶⁸ Ernest Hemingway: A Collection of Criticism, edited by Arthur Waldhorn⁶⁹ and Hemingway: a Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Robert P. Weeks.

In A Collection of Critical Essays, various critics have written on various points regarding The Sun Also Rises. For example, one critic articulates the theme of "The Death of Love in The Sun Also Rises." He says that one of the most persistent themes of the twenties was the

⁶⁷Philip Young, Ernest Hemingway (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1952), pp. 54-55.

⁶⁸Arthur Waldhorn, A Reader's Guide to Ernest Hemingway (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972).

⁶⁹Id., ed. Ernest Hemingway: A Collection of Criticism (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1973).

death of love in World War I. All the major writers treated it, he says,

in piecemeal fashion, as a part of the larger postwar scene; but only Hemingway seems to have caught it whole and delivered it in lasting fictional form. His intellectual grasp of the theme might account for this. Where D. H. Lawrence settles for the shock of war on the phallic consciousness or where Eliot presents assorted glimpses of sterility, Hemingway seems to design an extensive parable. Thus, in The Sun Also Rises, his antagonists are deliberately shaped as allegorical figures: Jake Barnes and Brett Ashley are two lovers desexed by the war; Robert Cohn is the false knight who challenges their despair; while Romero, the stalwart bullfighter, personifies the good life which will survive their failure. Of course, these characters are not abstractions in the text; they are realized through the most concrete style in American fiction, and their larger meaning is implied only by their response to immediate situations. But the implications are there, the parable is at work in every scene, and its presence lends unity and depth to the whole novel.⁷⁰

Arthur Waldhorn's A Reader's Guide to Ernest Hemingway analyses the various themes as well as the technique of The Sun Also Rises. He comments on the theme of death. He says that a basis for all of the actions of Hemingway's heroes is the concept of death. In fact, the idea of death permeates or lies behind all of the characters' actions in Hemingway's novels, says Waldhorn. Since death is the end of all things, it becomes the duty and the obligation of the Hemingway hero to avoid death at almost all costs. Waldhorn also comments on Hemingway's use of Jake as the narrator of the novel; it allows Hemingway to employ understatement, which forces readers to draw conclusions from things not overtly stated.⁷¹

⁷⁰Mark Spilka, "The Death of Love in The Sun Also Rises" in Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Robert P. Weeks (Englewood Cliffs: New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), p. 127.

⁷¹Arthur Waldhorn, A Reader's Guide to Ernest Hemingway, pp. 1-2.

Only one Atlanta University thesis was located that treats The Sun Also Rises. Cora Posey Austin in her thesis discusses Hemingway's ideas. For instance, she describes Hemingway's reflection of the tensions resulting from the First World War and the war's culmination in mass violence. She asserts that Hemingway subtly makes it apparent that the current violence comes as an unsatisfactory adjustment to a situation that is desperately unhappy, a situation that is the aftermath of the war. Hemingway skillfully uses this story to show the social disintegration of the postwar period, says Austin. He succeeds in doing this by showing the characters to be victims of the war. For example, Brett Ashley, the central character, is completely unsettled by the fact that her fiancé died in the war under tragic circumstances. As a result, Brett begins the progressive self-destruction that is inevitable with her. Austin also asserts that Hemingway uses his art--his ability to "tell the truth" and his honesty--to indict and reject civilization. She further believes that he does this effectively in The Sun Also Rises, a book which deliberately exploits a meaningless and decadent society. She says that The Sun Also Rises "realistically reflects the period of maladjustment following the first World War. The title of the novel comes from the first chapter of Ecclesiastes. The moral is derived from the same book, from the passage 'All is vanity and vexation of spirit.' The moral is quite appropriate. All is futile--at any rate, along the Vanity Fair of the Boulevard Montparnasse, which is the setting of the novel."⁷² Commenting on the characters in the novel,

⁷²Cora Posey Austin, "Irrationalism in the Novels of Ernest Hemingway" (Master's thesis, Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia, 1954), p. 57.

Austin says that they "are war-weary, dissipated expatriates on the Left Bank in Paris for whom life has lost its significance. They are victims of a love that cannot be consummated. Through Jake Barnes the author expresses extreme cynicism based chiefly on this hopeless situation. This affair illustrates spiritual and sexual frustration."⁷³

Various reviews of The Sun Also Rises were available for use in this paper. These include one by Conrad Aiken, who comments on both the themes and techniques of the novel. He says that Hemingway introduced a group of English and American drifters on the continent who have the money and the time to go where they like, from the boulevards of Paris to the bullfights of Spain, bathing, eating and drinking the while. Yet, says Aiken, the book is by no means a bit of sophisticated fluff: "It is the hard, acid truth about this group of ineffectuals and conveys the tragedy of their lives, particularly through the futile love of Jake, who tells the story, and Brett, the oversexed Lady Ashley. Conversation is the method chiefly used, and it is real talk, not writing. The dialogue is brilliant."⁷⁴

Unlike that positive view of The Sun Also Rises, some reviews offer negative comments. For example, one critic says that Hemingway's "characters are as shallow as the saucers in which they stack their daily emotions, and instead of interpreting his material--or even

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Conrad Aiken, review of The Sun Also Rises, by Ernest Hemingway, in New York Herald Tribune 31 October 1926, p. 4.

challenging it--he has been content merely to make a carbon copy of a not particularly significant surface of life in Paris."⁷⁵

Studies of William Faulkner, another of the authors included in the proposed course, are contained in this literature. Some of the books provide biographical detail as well as brief character-analyses of key people who inhabit Faulkner's fictional world. Who's Who in Faulkner, edited by Margaret Patricia Ford and Susan Kincaid, is such a book. Its index can be helpful to anyone who has read one or more of Faulkner's novels. This index briefly analyses the main characters in Intruder in the Dust. The editors believe that among the influences that shaped Faulkner's writings were the family legends passed down to him, his apprenticeship and his brief association with literary circles in New York and New Orleans, as well as the Mississippi world in which he lived most of his life. As a child, say the editors, Faulkner was probably influenced by the "Negro nurse--mammy Caroline Barr (1840-1940), to whom he later dedicated Go Down, Moses. Both Dilsey of The Sound and the Fury and Aunt Callie of The Reivers are at least a partial fictional portrait of this loyal family servant."⁷⁶ They also refer to the fact that Faulkner was awarded various prizes for his excellence as an author, including "in 1949 becoming the fourth American to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. The honor, following fairly close on the positive reception of Malcolm Cowley's influential Portable Faulkner

⁷⁵Ernest Body, review of The Sun Also Rises, by Ernest Hemingway in Dial, 20 January 1927, p. 73.

⁷⁶Margaret Patricia Ford and Susanne Kincaid, eds., Who's Who in Faulkner (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963), p. v.

(1946), marked the beginning of wide critical acceptance of his novels."⁷⁷

The critics Robert Coughlan, in The Private World of William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country,⁷⁸ and Lawrence Thompson, in William Faulkner: An Introduction and Interpretation,⁷⁹ say about the same thing as do Ford and Kincaid regarding Faulkner's life-history. Coughlan also says that Faulkner presents his characters like the Sheriff, Lucas and the old man (the old man here refers to "Nub" Gowrie, father of the slain Vinson Gowrie), in Intruder in the Dust with great admiration and that the villains are kept in the background. In discussing the literary career of Faulkner, Thompson lists many of his works. He also discusses the novelist's moral vision, concluding with the idea that Faulkner presented his fiction superbly and imaginatively and believed that other literary artists should do the same. Thompson says: "For Faulkner, the literary artist plays his part in the moral scheme of things by letting the indirections of his art create in his readers an awareness not only of conflicts but also of the possibilities for greater harmony through reconciliations of opposed drives in the human heart. In that way, Faulkner is convinced, all artists may serve as the 'mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present,' to use Shelley's words, and as the 'unacknowledged legislators of the

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 9.

⁷⁸Robert Coughlan, The Private World of William Faulkner (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1953).

⁷⁹Lawrence Thompson, William Faulkner: An Introduction and Interpretation (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1963).

world."⁸⁰ Thompson also states that "Intruder in the Dust considered as a murder mystery, or merely as an adventure story, makes good reading for those familiar with Faulkner's idiom."⁸¹

Cleanth Brooks in William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country also discusses various works by the novelist, including Intruder in the Dust.⁸² He discusses the community in which Intruder in the Dust is set, Gavin Stevens and the race problem, the faulty structure of the novel, Lucas Beauchamp's pride and integrity, and the education of Charles Mallison. That community is comprised of blacks and whites who have racial problems, declares Brooks. Analyzing the character of Gavin Stevens, Brooks says that Faulkner admires him and uses him as his mouthpiece to comment on racial problems in the south. Brooks also considers the plot of Intruder in the Dust incoherent. He thinks that Faulkner presents Lucas Beauchamp as a patient man who has pride, integrity and the dignity of his race.

Other critical material on Intruder in the Dust is found in various sources such as Time, Booklist, New York Herald Tribune, and New Yorker, which comment on both the techniques and themes of the novel. For example, a review by an anonymous author in Time comments on Faulkner's style and the story itself.⁸³ The reviewer says that the novel is simple and easy to follow.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 176.

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 12-13.

⁸²Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 289-292.

⁸³Anonymous, review of Intruder in the Dust, by William Faulkner, in Time, September 1948, p. 4.

Jack Conroy, reviewing Intruder in the Dust, says that "the novel is a southerner's view of race problems and solutions to them, stated in the discussion of a philosophic uncle and a boy coming into manhood, and given dramatic expression in the parable-like story of the near lynching of a 'Negro.'"⁸⁴ Conroy asserts that "Lucas Beuchamp's superior character and lack of customary subservience made the white people of Jefferson, Mississippi, at once respect and realize his dignity as a human being."⁸⁵

Harvey Breit, in his review of Intruder in the Dust, points out that the novel has two striking elements. "One is its tighter construction; the other is its political-social content."⁸⁶ By tighter construction Breit means that in a short novel of about two hundred pages Faulkner treats basic, important themes regarding the problem of the black people in the south against a bizarre tale involving murder, grave-robbing and lynching. By the political-social content Breit is referring to Faulkner's idea that the south must be left alone to solve its own political-social problems without any interference from the north.

Another critic, J. H. Jackson, centers his criticism primarily on style and technique.⁸⁷ He comments on Faulkner's shifting syntax, his

⁸⁴Jack Conroy, review of Intruder in the Dust, by William Faulkner, in Booklist 45(December 1948):120.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Harvey Breit, review of Intruder in the Dust, by William Faulkner, in New York Times, 26 September 1948, p. 4.

⁸⁷J. H. Jackson, review of Intruder in the Dust, by William Faulkner, in New Yorker, October 1948, p. 120.

use of pronouns and his unconventional punctuation, pointing out that these are a hindrance to the author in giving his messages accurately. On the positive side, Jackson says that the novel has the suspense and excitement which Faulkner always creates.

Malcolm Cowley, in an article entitled "William Faulkner's Nation" in New Republic, comments that Intruder in the Dust expresses the idea that lynching can be prevented not by federal laws, but simply by southerners. He praises the novelist for his style. He says that Faulkner has an extraordinary gift for revealing characters in action -- "All sorts of characters, a one-armed pine-hill farmer, a sheriff, an old maid, and Lucas sitting intractable in his cell. Each of these is presented with admiration and the villains are kept in the background."⁸⁸

Paolo Milano, in "Faulkner in Crisis,"⁸⁹ which appeared in Nation, analyses the various ideas that emerge from Intruder in the Dust. He declares that at the core of the book is the idea that whites should set black people free of oppression, of segregation and of lynching.

Three Atlanta University theses on Faulkner's work are useful for this paper. One, by Joyce L. Cherry, is entitled "The Evolution of Faulkner's Attitude Toward the Negro: A Study of His Major Fiction."⁹⁰

⁸⁸Malcolm Cowley, "William Faulkner's Nation," in New Republic, October 18, 1948, p. 21.

⁸⁹Paolo Milano, "Faulkner in Crisis," in Nation, October 1948, p. 496.

⁹⁰Joyce L. Cherry, "The Evolution of Faulkner's Attitude Toward the Negro: A Study of His Major Fiction" (Master's thesis, Atlanta University, 1968), p. 1.

Cherry suggests that one significant theme portrayed in Intruder in the Dust concerns the tense racial relationship between blacks and whites in the United States. This is treated through the characters of Lucas Beauchamp, a black man accused of the murder of Vinson Gowrie, two boys, Charles (Chick) Mallison and Aleck Sander, and an old maid, Miss Eunice Habersham. Initially the community felt that Lucas Beauchamp was guilty of the murder solely because he was black and was found standing over the body of a murdered white man. Cherry says that it is through the portrayal of Lucas Beauchamp that the theme of racial problems in the United States is explored.

In another thesis, entitled "The Significance of Intruder in the Dust in Relation to Sartoris, The Sound and the Fury and Absalom! Absalom," Boyd Minner, Jr. shows that Intruder in the Dust is concerned with black and white attitudes in the south. It is important that blacks appear significantly in the two vital Faulkner novels of 1929, Sartoris and The Sound and the Fury. In many respects, the Gibson (black) family, headed by Dilsey, is presented as being as remarkable as the Compson (white) family, and morally healthier. The author points out that when Intruder in the Dust was written in 1948, it was at a time when there was heightened black awareness, when blacks in the south were demanding justice, civil rights and equality. Furthermore, social and political organizations began to demand equality for blacks, and at this time their activism affected southern thinking, says Minner. He finds an example of blacks demanding justice in the Supreme Court's intervention in matters of school desegregation, which followed Faulkner's writing of Intruder in the Dust. It is important to note

that May 10, 1954, is the date of the famous Brown versus Topeka (Kansas) ruling by the Supreme Court, which categorically stated that segregated schools are unconstitutional.

It is Intruder in the Dust itself that illustrates the change in southern thinking. When Lucas Beauchamp is accused of murdering a white man, Charles Mallison, a young white boy, joined by his negro friend Aleck Sander and by Miss Habersham, an aristocratic white woman, violates the rigid customs of the community by going to the cemetery with his companions and digging up the grave of the dead man, only to find that Lucas has not committed the murder. Charles Mallison saves Lucas' life. He goes against the traditions of his community to save the negro. During this process young Mallison maintains his personal integrity against his prejudiced community. As he takes on so harsh a responsibility, he reaches maturity. Faulkner seems to suggest that the future of the south, regarding black and white people, is to lie in its young people, unstained by conservative adult thinking.⁹¹

The third thesis is entitled "Faulkner's Treatment of Women in His Major Novels" and is by Beverly G. Sheftall. The significance of this thesis to the dissertation is that it provides a lengthy bibliography on Faulkner and discusses his thoughts; however, it does not discuss Intruder in the Dust.

The following books have been included for critical commentary on J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye, another of the novels included in the course. One is entitled: J. D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye": A Critical Commentary, by Charlotte Alexander. This book briefly discusses the life and work of Salinger and analyzes and comments on the novel. It discusses its themes and provides a bibliography and guide to further research. Concerning the novel, Alexander points out that it is

⁹¹Boyd Minner, Jr., "The Significance of Intruder in the Dust in Relation to Sartoris, The Sound and the Fury and Absalom! Absalom!" (Master's thesis, Atlanta University 1973), p. 3.

the story of an adolescent boy on the brink of adulthood and that The Catcher in the Rye is, superficially, Holden's personal narrative of his four-day attempt to find a fixed reality, free of adult "phoniness." Alexander analyses the characters in the novel as follows: Phoebe Caulfield, Holden's only sister, is extremely vital for the novel. "In the novel, Phoebe receives Holden's full esteem, as she represents the continued flow of children who must be cared for, the life-process that is man's responsibility. Her unselfishness stems from a basic innocence which Holden understands, but which overwhelms him."⁹² Allie, another character, is Holden's brother who died of leukemia July 18, 1946. He was two years younger than Holden. "Allie is another of the near perfect, precocious, young people who populate his (Salinger's) fiction. He functions almost as an alter ego to Holden, who compares everything to him."⁹³ Finally, there is the depiction of Holden Caulfield, the central character and the sole source of information for the events in the book. Holden, the first-person narrator, is a modern teenager who, like most of the other Salinger protagonists, is young, a sort of mad saint, or perhaps a mad, saintly youth; that is, he is not so much in rebellion against the established world of adult middle-class values as he is perhaps a victim of that world. He is a hypersensitive individual who suffers from excesses of beauty, as he suffers also from failure of love. There are other, minor characters whom Alexander simply mentions in passing, not in detail.

⁹²Charlotte Alexander, J. D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye": A Critical Commentary (New York: Monarch Press, 1965), p. 54.

⁹³Ibid., p. 55.

Kenneth Hamilton's book entitled J. D. Salinger discusses the interplay of life and art and the writer's task.⁹⁴ Hamilton declares that it is the writer's task to reflect life as it really is. He also discusses the religious quality of American life as found in Salinger's novel. Through Holden Salinger criticizes religion, says Hamilton. Hamilton also provides a selected bibliography of Salinger's work.

The last of these books, If You Really Want to Know: A Catcher Casebook, edited by Malcolm M. Marsden, contains helpful articles on various works by Salinger.⁹⁵ Section one, "First Reactions: The Book Reviews," contains reviews of The Catcher in the Rye. Most of these say much the same thing, namely that it is an engaging and believable story which has a wonderful grasp of an adolescent's passage from youth to adulthood.

Section two, titled "Saint or Psychotic? Conflicting Views of Holden," has a variety of articles on The Catcher in the Rye. One of these, entitled "Incommunicability in Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye," points out that the main reason for Caulfield's communicative difficulty lies in his absolute hatred of "phoniness."⁹⁶ Caulfield finds that hypocrisy thrives not only in the world of his personal contacts, but in the world of art as well. Most articles in this section generally concur with Holden's view. The third section, titled

⁹⁴Kenneth Hamilton, J. D. Salinger: A Critical Essay (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdman, 1967), pp. 5-6.

⁹⁵Malcolm M. Marsden, If You Really Want to Know: A Catcher Casebook (Chicago: Scott, Foresman Company, 1963).

⁹⁶Charles H. Kegel, "Incommunicability in Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye," Western Humanities Review (Spring 1957):188.

"Language, Structure, Symbol: The Craft of J. D. Salinger," is comprised of articles which discuss, among other things, the language of the novel. One, titled "The Language of The Catcher in the Rye," is by Donald P. Costello. It discusses Caulfield's informal speech, his vocabulary, including obscenities and slang, and his violation of grammatical rules. The author concludes that "The language of The Catcher in the Rye is an authentic artistic rendering of a type of informal, colloquial, teenage American spoken speech."⁹⁷

The last section is entitled "The Carrousel and the Raft: Holden and Huck" and contains various articles which compare two protagonists, Holden Caulfield and Huck Finn, of The Catcher in the Rye and Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn respectively. In "Huck Finn and Holden Caulfield: The Situation of the Hero" in the Ohio University Review, Arvin R. Wells points out that the two novels have strong affinities. For instance, in both the immediate interest is the personality of the teenage protagonist, whose colloquial language and moral sensibility give the reported events their color. Both protagonists seek freedom. Huck Finn goes down the river with Jim to seek freedom in a new home where the injustices of the old life will not exist. Holden too is seeking a new home, a place where it will be possible for him to become involved with people and with life without the inevitable pain and disillusionment that seem to come with involvement. Finally, the critic concludes that: "Both Huck Finn and Holden Caulfield are in some sense

⁹⁷Donald Costello, "The Language of The Catcher in the Rye, American Speech, XXXIV (October 1959):75, reprinted in If You Really Want to Know: A Catcher Casebook by Malcolm M. Marsden, p. 95.

pariahs in the society to which they belong by birth--outsiders uncertain of the necessity and desirability of becoming insiders. The critical responses spring from the same fund of assumed values--sincerity, simple decency, and respect for whatever survives of inherent dignity in human beings."⁹⁸

Various other critical articles were also used in interpreting The Catcher in the Rye. For example, in Jonathan Baumbach's article "The Saint as a Young Man..." he credits the novel with having life because it is a significantly original work, "full of insights into at least the particular truth of Holden's existence."⁹⁹ Baumbach asserts that The Catcher in the Rye is a perfect novel; it is self-defining--that is, there seems to be an inevitability about its form.

Harvey Breit's review of The Catcher in the Rye also compares it to Huckleberry Finn, finding many similarities between Caulfield and Finn.¹⁰⁰ Ann L. Goodman finds the book to be brilliant; nevertheless, she feels that from a writer of Salinger's undeniable talent one expects something more. Her criticism is directed towards Salinger's use of profanity in the text.¹⁰¹ J. D. Hainsworth, another critic, discusses

⁹⁸Arvin R. Wells, "Huck Finn and Holden Caulfield: The Situation of the Hero," Ohio University Review (Athens) 1(July 1960):31-42, reprinted in If You Really Want to Know, p. 144.

⁹⁹Jonathan Baumbach, "The Saint as a Young Man: A Reappraisal of The Catcher in the Rye in Modern Language Quarterly, 25(December 1964):461.

¹⁰⁰Harvey Breit, review of The Catcher in the Rye, by J. D. Salinger, in The Atlantic Bookself, 188(August 1951):82.

¹⁰¹Ann L. Goodman, review of The Catcher in the Rye, by J. D. Salinger, in New Republic, 125(July 16, 1951):20-21.

the question "How Mature is Holden Caulfield?" and concludes that The Catcher in the Rye "is not adolescent because Holden, the protagonist, is very much aware of the amount of evil in the world."¹⁰² Ernest Jones in "Case History of All of Us--The Catcher in the Rye" declares that it is a popular novel because "it is a mirror, it reflects something not at all rich and strange but what every sensitive sixteen-year-old since Rousseau has felt, and of course, what each of us is certain he has felt."¹⁰³

Harrison Smith in his review considers The Catcher in the Rye a book to be read thoughtfully, and more than once, because of its philosophic content. Through Holden one becomes conscious of the hypocrisy of society. "Holden simply wants to know what makes him find so many people false and ignoble at the same time that he is aware of his capacity for love."¹⁰⁴

"The Symbolic Structure of The Catcher in the Rye," by Clinton W. Trowbridge, is about different levels of symbolism in the novel. Metaphors and images are cited and their meaning discussed. The author also shows that each character in Salinger's work represents some idea. For example, Holden represents certain attributes: "Like Christ, he finds pity and compassion to be stronger in him than self-will."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰²J. D. Hainsworth, "Maturity in J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye," English Studies 48(September 1967):426.

¹⁰³Ernest Jones, "Case History of All of Us: The Catcher in the Rye," Nation, September 1, 1951, p. 176.

¹⁰⁴Harrison Smith, review of The Catcher in the Rye, by J. D. Salinger in Saturday Review of Literature, 14 July 1951, p. 12.

¹⁰⁵Clinton W. Trowbridge, "The Symbolic Structure of The Catcher in the Rye," Sewanee Review, 13 July 1966, p. 684.

Another character, Sally Hayes, represents the double nature of the social world as it is. "It is full of falsity but undeniably attractive."¹⁰⁶ The character Phoebe represents the world of children, the world of innocence. The author also discusses symbolism at another level, at the level of ideas and images used to represent something else. For example, he says:

The significance of the catcher image lies in three things. First of all, it is a savior image and shows us the extent of Holden's religious idealism. Secondly, it crystallizes for us Holden's concept of good and evil; childhood is good, the only pure good, but is surrounded by perils, the cliff of adolescence over which the children will plunge into the evil of adulthood unless stopped. But finally the image is based on a misunderstanding. The Burns poem goes 'If a body meet a body' not 'if a body catch a body', two words ('catch' and 'meet') are re-examined and re-interpreted by Holden at the end of the novel, showing us in a powerful and deeply suggestive way the center of Holden's difficulty.¹⁰⁷

Only one thesis on Salinger was located, M. Ida Hayes' "Social Criticism in the Fiction of J. D. Salinger" (1967). "Some critics argue that Salinger is a protest writer and others say that he is a sociological novelist."¹⁰⁸ Hayes identifies with the first group of critics. This thesis is divided into four chapters. In chapter one the author discusses views of Salinger by various critics, as well as the meaning of his fiction. Chapter two treats Salinger's fiction as an attack on American culture by pointing out his rebellion against the materialistic preoccupation in American culture and by exploring

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 685.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 687.

¹⁰⁸Ida M. Hayes, "Social Criticism in the Fiction of J. D. Salinger" (Master's thesis, Atlanta University, 1967), pp. 1-2.

Rousseau's philosophy as the background for Salinger's attitude towards the institutions which he criticizes. Chapter three is an evaluation of The Catcher in the Rye as Salinger's major expression of social criticism. Holden Caulfield's rebellion against the order of things, in effect, summarizes Salinger's stand against society. Chapter four is an assessment of Salinger's technique for making his attacks on society.

The ensuing section constitutes a review of some of the numerous works on Ralph Ellison the man and on his novel, Invisible Man.

Only one book was located for use in this paper on the study of Invisible Man, Ralph Ellison: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by John Hersey. This book contains valuable critical articles on various works by Ellison. It also contains a dialogue between Ellison and Hersey. One of the most significant views of the work of Ellison is his own, as contained in this interview. In it he "talks about his attitude toward the actuality of his craft, about the processes of his creative ordeal, about what he thinks actually happens when he writes, about the deep familial sources of his ways of being and doing, about how his mind works through problems of shape and dream and sound, and about the particular, idiosyncratic inner workings of his art which may have been molded by his existential past."¹⁰⁹ Articles in this book also examine either themes or technique, or both, in Invisible Man. Still others discuss the achievements of Ellison in his literary career.

¹⁰⁹"Introduction: 'A Completion of Personality:' A Talk with Ralph Ellison," in Ralph Ellison: A Collection of Critical Essays edited by John Hersey (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1974), p. 1.

"The Politics of Ellison's Booker: Invisible Man as Symbolic History," by Richard Kostelanetz, and "Invisible Man as History," by Russel G. Fischer, discuss how the novel reflects to a certain extent American history and the history of black Americans. Fischer points out that the first section of the novel is "permeated with the specter and philosophy of Booker T. Washington, who from 1895 until his death in 1915 was regarded by whites as the chief spokesman for Negroes in the United States."¹¹⁰ Similarly, Kostelanetz says that Washington's philosophy about black people in the United States is reflected in Invisible Man:

Ellison's narrator so thoroughly and innocently subscribes to the Washingtonian ethic that, when he is selected to give the valedictory address at his high school, he echoes both Washington's ideas and his rhetoric. Telling his Negro classmates to cultivate friendly relations with their white neighbors, the narrator quotes the key line of Washington's Atlanta proclamation address, "Cast down your bucket where you are," for, it is implied, if the colored southerners look for water elsewhere, they may die of thirst.¹¹¹

Some of the critics see Invisible Man as a parallel or a contrast to another work of the Western world. Charles W. Scruggs discusses "Ralph Ellison's Use of the Aeneid," Marcia R. Lieberman compares and contrasts Invisible Man with Voltaire's Candide, and Earl A. Cash compares it to Fyodor M. Dostoevsky's Notes from Underground. There is a character in Invisible Man called Sibyl, a married white woman and another, Rinehart, a racketeer, lover and minister. Rinehart's aim is

¹¹⁰Russel G. Fischer, "Invisible Man as History," College Language Association Journal 17(March 1974):338.

¹¹¹Richard Kostelanetz, "The Politics of Ellison's Booker: Invisible Man as Symbolic History," Chicago Review 19(December 1967):5.

to use Sibyl as a spy in the Brotherhood hierarchy. Interpreting this scene, Scruggs says that Ellison "parodies a crucial encounter between the Cumaean Sybil and Aeneas in Book Six of the Aeneid."¹¹² Aeneas, too, comes to the Sybil for information, for he has been told that he will discover his destiny when she guides him through the underworld.

In the Elysian fields his father, Anchises, reveals to him that he will be the ancestor of Romulus, the founder of Rome. In his typically outrageous way, Ellison makes a punning allusion to this situation. As Sybil drinks her way into oblivion, she worries that the narrator will become too intoxicated to make love. He tells her not to be concerned (about his being black), that he "rapes real good" when he is drunk. She is delighted "as a child." The absurd reversal of the American stereotype (the black beast now being assaulted by blonde innocence) causes the narrator to exclaim: "What's happening here... a new birth of a nation?" (p. 394) The joke is twofold: not only does Ellison allude to Griffith's (D. W. Griffith's film entitled "Birth of a Nation") famous film about the Reconstruction in which all the racial stereotypes are given a rebirth, but he is also obliquely alluding to the new nation that the Cumaean Sybil makes possible for Aeneas' descendants.¹¹³

Scruggs also declares that Ellison's parody of The Aeneid sheds light on another important theme in Invisible Man, that is, the search for a new home. Aeneas is a Trojan whose home has been destroyed and whose people have been enslaved by Greeks. He must set sail for a new home, a goal which will elude him time and again when it seems just within reach. Similarly, Scruggs declares that "the pilgrimage in Invisible Man deals with the doubt and uncertainty of the narrator as he tries to find a home to replace the one he has lost. The first loss is obviously Africa, but the most poignant loss in the novel is the Eden-like college

¹¹²Charles W. Scruggs, "Ralph Ellison's Use of the Aeneid in Invisible Man," College Language Association Journal 17(March 1974):369.

¹¹³Ibid., p. 375.

from which he is exiled."¹¹⁴ Scruggs adds that the search for home is an important theme throughout the novel, one that goes hand in hand with the narrator's search for himself and, by extension, with the black people's search for their place in the American setting. Finally, Scruggs states that both the Roman poet Virgil and the twentieth-century American novelist have used myth to give a sense of cultural identity to their people; each has used myth to dignify history.

Marcia R. Lieberman, in an article entitled: "Moral Innocents: Ellison's Invisible Man and Candide," compares the two works, asserting that Invisible Man's resemblance to Candide is not superficial, but manifested throughout, extending beyond the similarity between Ellison's and Voltaire's central characters. "There are interesting points of comparison between them with respect to narrative structure, point of view, and moral intention."¹¹⁵

Earl A. Cash, in "The Narrators in Invisible Man and Notes from Underground: Brothers in the Spirit," compares and contrasts the heroes of the two novels. He concludes that "the narrators, despite their racial differences, share a spiritual bond, one of desperation, bewilderment, and frustration." And where they depart underscores Ellison's imaginative independence. As Cash aptly notes, "whatever his debt to Dostoevsky, no one who reads Invisible Man will challenge his (Ellison's) claim to originality."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Marcia R. Lieberman, "Moral Innocents: Ellison's Invisible Man and Candide," College Language Association Journal 15(September 1971):64.

¹¹⁶Earl A. Cash, "The Narrators in Invisible Man and Notes from Underground: Brothers in the Spirit," College Language Association Journal 16(June 1973):505.

In "Rejection of Paternalism: Hawthorne's 'My Kinsman Major Molineux' and Ellison's Invisible Man," Barbara Fass likens Hawthorne's story to Ellison's novel, saying that the possible relationship of these works to each other assumes particular significance given their themes. Both are concerned with paternalism and the need to seek an identity separate from the "fathers," as Fass writes:

What it means in our own times, when so many black writers are seeking a unique medium--one not dependent on white America--to express themselves, to say that this major novel by a black writer may have its source in Hawthorne should not need much initial comment. What the rest of this essay hopes to demonstrate, however, is the ironic appropriateness of this possible source.¹¹⁷

Fass notes various similarities between the two works. She says that the journey of a young man from the country to the city in Western literature has lent itself to two different, and in some ways contradictory, motifs. On the one side the journey can be seen as an allegory of the moral transition from innocence to experience. In this sense the loss is frequently like that of Eden, and thus lamentable. "On the other side, there is the idea that contends that growth or self-identity depends upon breaking away from one's origins, and in this sense the earlier loss proves to involve a 'fortunate fall.' Rarely do the motifs combine in a single work, but notable instances of their merger can be found in Hawthorne's story, " 'My Kinsman, Major Molineux,' and Ellison's novel Invisible Man."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷Barbara Fass, "Rejection of Paternalism: Hawthorne's 'My Kinsman, Major Molineux' and Ellison's Invisible Man," College Language Association Journal 14(December 1978):317.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 317.

Other writers discuss Ellison's ideas, as revealed in his speeches, or they write about his achievements. For example, Hoyt W. Fuller in Black World outlines the achievements of Ellison from the time he received the coveted National Book Award for Invisible Man (1953) until 1970. Fuller concludes that Ellison, who was also named Albert Schweitzer Professor in the Humanities at New York University in 1970, is a highly regarded writer. In addition, Ellison has been associated in one way or another--"through teaching fellowships--with numerous American colleges and universities, from Tuskegee, his alma mater, to Princeton University."¹¹⁹

Ernest Kaiser, in his article: "A Critical Look at Ellison's Fiction and a Social and Literary Criticism By and About the Author," discusses briefly Ellison's life and literary history, what Ellison has read and how it has influenced him, and, finally, how the new criticism of black literature is devastating and stereotypic. Kaiser says that Ellison read the works of Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway and T. S. Eliot, and that this reading influenced his view of life, especially his perspective on black American life. Kaiser declared:

It was Ellison's reading in 1935 of T. S. Eliot's long poem, "The Waste Land," with, as he says, its emphasis on life's all-encompassing frustrations, ironies and a hint at the developing thunder against such frustrations that Negroes could relate to, that turned him to writing, and not to a political understanding of the Negro's terrible plight during the depression. It was also Eliot's intensity, sensibility and use of language that fascinated Ellison.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹Hoyt W. Fuller, "The Achievements of Ralph Ellison," Black World 20(December 1970):5.

¹²⁰Ernest Kaiser, "A Critical Look at Ellison's Fiction and at Social and Literary Criticism By and About the Author," Black World (December 1970):53.

Other critics discuss the themes, techniques and significance of Invisible Man. For instance, after his discussion of "Ralph Ellison and the Underground Man," Clifford Mason ends his article by asserting that the significance of Invisible Man in American literature falls into two categories: one achievement is a general American novel about a general American situation and the other is a novel about the inability of white America really to see black America. On the other hand, J. Noel Heermance, in "A White Critic's Viewpoint: The Modern Negro Novel," states that the majority of the white critics have interpreted black literature in such a way as to place black people in a sort of "cage" so that they feel inferior to the white race. However, with the emergence of black novelists like Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin, the "cage" has been completely turned around and they have

. . . pictured the white world as trapped within its past history and its present preconceptions. Thus the cage is on the other foot, as it were, and the Negro is now on the outside looking in. Only he is looking in with a greater compassion and sensitivity than the white man ever looked in with. Thus not only is the Negro emancipated from his cage, but he has attained the even greater stature--moral and religious--of being the free man concerned about the horrible lostness of the prisoner.¹²¹

Heermance also declares that Invisible Man achieves a new and exciting stature because of its treatment of important themes such as quest for black identity, both "personal identity" and "social place," by a young, unnamed narrator. Similarly, Eugenia W. Collier, in the "Nightmare

¹²¹J. Noel Heermance, "A White Critic's Viewpoint: The Modern Negro Novel," Negro Digest (May 1964):76.

Truth of an Invisible Man," discusses the question of black identity. She says that Ellison used dreams in Invisible Man to portray the quest for black identity. Speaking of jazz, spirituals and church music in Invisible Man, she says that music is an important aspect of black American culture. She also shows how the history of the slavery of black people in the United States is reflected in the novel. She does this by interpreting various dreams in it. For instance, in interpreting the combination of the Grandfather, clown and briefcase dreams, Collier asserts that they all carry a message which explains to the innocent protagonist certain essential facts of black life. That is, that white people enslaved black people, dehumanized them, oppressed them and still coerce and torment them. To Collier these dreams symbolize:

That the white establishment (with its concomitant, the white-oriented Negro) is the enemy, bent on furthering its own ends; that its favorite tactic regarding black people is to keep the niggers running. Black people who are susceptible to this tactic are merely clowns, manipulated by the white man, wearing grinning masks that conceal the tragedy underneath.¹²²

Another article discusses Ellison's interview. This is John Corry's "Profiles of an American Novelist," which treats Ellison's thoughts in an interview in which he said, "I am a novelist, not an activist, but I think that no one who reads what I write or who listens to my lectures can doubt that I'm enlisted in the freedom movement."¹²³ This interview is significant because from it one gets Ellison's ideas directly, not from some second-hand source.

¹²²Eugenia W. Collier, "The Nightmare Truth of an Invisible Man," Black World, 20 December 1970, p. 16.

¹²³John Corry, "Profiles of an American Novelist," Black World, 20 December 1970, p. 116.

Ellison "mourns" the fact that critics sometimes measure a black author's output by lesser standards than they do a white writer's. He finds this a peculiarly depressing kind of patronage. "Bad art is bad art,"¹²⁴ he says. Ellison in this interview also talked about writing, saying that "If I give a negative picture of Negro life, if I write that all Negroes are rapists, then people will say, 'Yes, they really are like that.' I don't have to worry about their condition."¹²⁵ The significance of the interview to this research is that through it one gets to know Ellison's point of view and through his own words to see exactly what he is saying in his novel.

Another critic, William Walling, in an article entitled "Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man: It Goes a Long Way Back, Some Twenty Years," looks at the merits and problems of Invisible Man. He recalls that the novel was greeted with high praise at the time of its publication in 1952, that it was the recipient of the National Book Award in January of the following year and that it was voted "The most distinguished single work published in the last twenty years" by a newspaper poll in 1965. "As a result, it has retained so strong a popular appeal that it has recently exhausted its twenty-fourth paperback printing from one publisher (the "Signet" edition of New American Library), and is now being distributed under a fresh paperback imprint (the "Vintage" edition of Random House)."¹²⁶ Walling states that critics as diverse and as

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 120.

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 123.

¹²⁶William Walling, "Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man: It Goes a Long Way Back, Some Twenty Years," Phylon: The Atlanta University Review of Race and Culture, 34(March 1973):4.

distinguished as Earl Rovit, Robert Penn Warren and Jonathan Baumbach have all attested to the extraordinary achievements of Invisible Man.

Despite its merits, Walling says, there are problems connected with the novel which any serious student soon discovers. One is that various critics interpret Invisible Man differently. Earl Rovit describes it as "profoundly comic." Jonathan Baumbach, on the other hand, discerns "a singularly unpleasant nightmare" beneath the comic surface, and Marcus Klein feels equally certain that the book is "death-driven." Ideally, then, asserts Walling, the task for the critic "is twofold: to reconcile, as far as possible, the divergent critical views which have grown up about the novel since its appearance twenty years ago and to confront the larger question of whether this critical examination can have any meaning at all for those readers who, like the black students at Oberlin (they told Ellison that his novel did not mean anything to them), find Invisible Man useless--or worse--in terms of their own experience."¹²⁷

Walling also writes on various themes and techniques of the book. One of the themes is "Keep this nigger boy running,"¹²⁸ and another is the problem of sexual identity in a racially confused society. He comments that the narrative structure of Invisible Man is largely obscured, and he illustrates this point by citing three motifs used in the novel, namely: "the burden and ambiguity of the past upon the individual; the problem of perception in a world given over to

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 5.

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 7.

illusion; and the location of the true source of power behind the facade of social life."¹²⁹ Walling says that all three motifs are effectively subsumed under the mask of a far more obvious issue with a dual aspect: the general place of the black man in American society and the specific question of the identity of the black individual in the United States. He also looks at symbolism at various levels. There is symbolism at the character level, with characters like Dr. Bledsoe and Brother Wrestrum carrying a symbolic meaning. Walling asserts: "Dr. Bledsoe and Brother Wrestrum can therefore be seen as the two most pronounced examples of a totally false relationship to the American Negro's past: the desire to pretend that the historical reality of slavery is susceptible to concealment for the sake of present advancement. Thus Bledsoe, although he is willing to keep a leg shackle on his desk as a 'symbol of our progress' (p. 126), is yet so secretly unreconciled to his heritage that he explodes into fury when he discovers the narrator has taken the white philanthropist Norton to the old 'slave-quarter section.'" ¹³⁰ Walling says also that "Wrestrum, even more alienated from his past than is Bledsoe, instinctively recoils from the sight of a leg shackle itself (in this case Tarp's), advising the narrator 'to conceal the shackle from whites.'" ¹³¹ Another level of symbolism is "the device of blindness or of defective sight to emblemize a failure of perception,"¹³² says Walling. The preacher Homer Barbee is blind, both

¹²⁹Ibid., p. 9.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 10.

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²Ibid., p. 11.

physically and in his unawareness of political realities. The theme of blindness delivers a message to the black people in the south who are in quest of self-fulfillment that the south in fact offers no hope for except to the blind. Concluding on the theme of blindness, Walling writes: "In short, a distinct tempering of the stark imagery of blindness precedes and prepares for the resolution achieved by the narrator at the end of his painful odyssey through illusion: 'I'm invisible, not blind.'"¹³³

Walling wrote another critique of Invisible Man in an article entitled "'Art' and 'Protest': Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man Twenty Years After." In this article Walling praises Ellison for his imagination and powerful techniques. He believes that it is not "art" in any narrow sense that makes Invisible Man so memorable. Rather, it is Ellison's ability, within the context of "a sustained racial subject, to convey as much of the rich variety of human experience as he does: 'the pathetically ignorant black boy at the white smoker, the white 'philanthropist' Norton with his labyrinthine motivations, the paranoiac self-importance of the black Lucius Brockway in the bowels of Liberty Paints, the fantasies of comfortable violation in the white Sybil.'"¹³⁴ These examples make clear that Ellison's portrayal of the rich human experience contributes to the greatness of his novel. Walling concludes: "Again and again, in fact, the effect is strikingly different

¹³³Ibid., p. 12.

¹³⁴William Walling, "Art and Protest: Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man Twenty Years After." Phylon: The Atlanta University Review of Race and Culture, 34(June 1973):133-134.

from the abstractions which ordinarily populate our fiction on racial themes. And it is this quality of Ellison's, I would argue, that reminds us, beyond all 'ordinary' aesthetic satisfactions, of that fuller sense of humanity which is going to be necessary for whatever version of a just society the writer of protest chooses to advocate."¹³⁵

Another critic, Louis D. Mitchell, in an article entitled "Invisibility--Permanent or Resurrective," declares that "there is beneath Ellison's epilogue a ring of a hope--a lesson he learned from his ancestors--that in the quest for romance, or theme of the black experience, there is a desire, a longing, a searching for optimistic fulfillment--a fulfillment that would deliver a people from the anxieties of reality and will still contain the best parts of that reality."¹³⁶ Mitchell concludes: "Essentially invisible, the narrator undergoes a succession of superficial changes of identity which the whole book is about--in a sense, changes of mask--each entailing a symbolic, though illusory, death and rebirth."¹³⁷

Therman B. O'Daniel, another critic, has written an article entitled "The Image of Man as Portrayed by Ralph Ellison," in which he says that Ellison's philosophy of the life of black people is that "whatever there is of value in Negro life is an American heritage and as such it must be preserved. It is, then, this attitude, this philosophy of life, that enabled Ellison to portray in his novel perhaps the best-

¹³⁵Ibid., p. 134.

¹³⁶Louis D. Mitchell, "Invisibility--Permanent or Resurrective." College Language Association Journal 17(March 1974):386.

¹³⁷Ibid.

balanced and most complete and comprehensive image of black America that has yet been presented by any contemporary writer."¹³⁸ Actually, in order to make the protagonist's image as full and as rounded as possible, "The author pulls out, as it were, all of the stops on his mighty fictional organ, permitting all of the pipes to blast out their eclectic sounds upon the American scene. Some realism, some pessimism, a considerable amount of disillusionment, some bitter irony and satire, and even some hate are all found in this unusual novel."¹³⁹ John A. Williams, another critic, in an article entitled "Ralph Ellison and Invisible Man: Their Place in American Letters,"¹⁴⁰ agrees with many of the critics' comments, saying that this novel stands as a monumental work, dealing with gigantic things, mostly black. Nick Aaron Ford,¹⁴¹ in an article entitled "The Ambivalence of Ralph Ellison," explores some examples of ambivalence in this novel. He says that one type of intellectual challenge can be sparked by ambivalence. In factual prose ambivalence of meaning is a fault to be condemned, but in imaginative literature it can become a prized asset. One example of ambivalence is the advice from the protagonist's grandfather who, as he lies dying, offers a final lesson in the art of living in a white world: "I want you

¹³⁸Therman B. O'Daniel, "The Image of Man as Portrayed by Ralph Ellison," College Language Association Journal 4(June 1967):284.

¹³⁹Ibid.

¹⁴⁰John A. Williams, "Ralph Ellison and Invisible Man: Their Place in American Letters," Black World 20(December 1970):10.

¹⁴¹Nick Aaron Ford, "The Ambivalence of Ralph Ellison," Black World 20(December 1970):5.

to overcome 'em (white people) with yeses, undermine 'em with grins, agree 'em to death and destruction, let 'em swoller you till they vomit or bust wide open."¹⁴² According to Ford, this passage's obvious meaning appears to be that blacks can best survive in a white society by pretending to accept the values of the majority, by giving verbal assent to the majority will. However, additional levels of possibility are suggested in Chapter 23, in which the protagonist ponders his grandfather's deathbed advice: "Could he have meant--hell, he must have meant--the principle--or did he mean that we had to take the responsibility for all of it?"¹⁴³ Ford then concludes that "The reader must decide for himself whether Invisible Man is a good novel because of or in spite of, the author's ambivalence."¹⁴⁴

M. Celeste Oliver, in "Invisible Man and the Numbers Game," discusses the novel from quite a different stance than have other critics. First Oliver defines the numbers game: "The numbers, also known as policy, the lottery, and the numbers game and/or racket, is the illicit institution organized around those forms of gambling in which players bet on numbers within a specified range--one of which is later selected in random fashion as a winner."¹⁴⁵ The gist of that essay is the fact that the numbers game symbolizes the quest for freedom by the

¹⁴²Nick Aaron Ford, "The Ambivalence of Ralph Ellison," Black World 20(December 1970):9, quoted from Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man (New York: Random House, 1952), p. 16.

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴Nick Aaron Ford, "The Ambivalence of Ralph Ellison," p. 9.

¹⁴⁵Celeste Oliver, "Invisible Man and the Numbers Game," College Language Association Journal 22(December 1978):123.

protagonist. Oliver goes on with many other illustrative episodes of the numbers game in Ellison's novel. The point is that many critics have discussed Invisible Man from many points of view, including that of the numbers game.

In conclusion, after reviewing the literature on Ellison's novel, it can be said that Invisible Man has been subjected to criticism of many kinds. Some critics have viewed it as a response to the plight of the black man in America; others have claimed that it is meaningful as a commentary on the shifting, elusive nature of appearance and reality, body and mind; others have chosen to analyse it as a statement of problems of the individual versus the group; still others have viewed it as an exploration of the dilemma of modern man in a hostile environment. Other critics have looked at the powerful techniques Ellison uses to pursue his ideas. Among these are: Henry F. Winslow, "Book Review of Invisible Man," Crisis (59:397-398, June-July 1952); Irving Howe, "A Negro in America: Invisible Man," Nation (174:454 May 10, 1952); "Black and Blue: Invisible Man," Time (59:112, April 14, 1952); "Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man," reviewed in Booklist (48:378, July 15, 1952); "Candide in Harlem," Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man reviewed in Atlantic Monthly (190:84, July 1952); finally, George Manberry's "Underground Notes: Invisible Man," in New Republic (126:19, April 21, 1952).

Besides the above publications, three Atlanta University theses on Invisible Man were used in this study. One of these is "The White Critic and the Black Novel"¹⁴⁶ by Cyrus Wesley Hickson, Jr. Hickson's

¹⁴⁶Cyrus Wesley Hickson, Jr. "The White Critic and the Black Novel" (Master's thesis, Atlanta University, 1971).

view is that Invisible Man is both a valuable addition to American literature and a valuable source of information for future historians of black-white relations in the Depression decade. He says that white critics sometimes judge black people's works by lesser standards than they do those by whites. "Patterns of Absurdity in Invisible Man," by Dorothy Morgan Hollowell, is another Atlanta University thesis. It is divided into three chapters. Chapter one discusses the historical roots of absurdity, treating such novelists as Sartre, Dostoevsky and Ellison. After examining their ideas on the nature of absurdity, the author shows how these views have been reflected in Invisible Man. In chapter two the author examines the theme of sexuality in Invisible Man from the point of view of absurdity, and in the last chapter she explains how the absurd can prevent one from acquiring one's identity. In conclusion, Hollowell finds similarities among Dostoevsky, Sartre and Ellison in their treatment of "historical roots" of the concept of the absurd. The absurdity of the universe is discoverable, according to all three novelists, in all cultures and in every historical epoch. Finally, she says: "In the works previously discussed, we saw that man was estranged from the larger society which he sought to enter. Resulting from such estrangement were mingled emotions of emptiness, ennui, forlornness, alienation, confinement and purposeless reality. Such futilities were seen in Ellison's Invisible Man as the protagonist strove to define his identity and to prove his worth by accepting everybody's definition of his being except his own."¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷Dorothy Morgan Hollowell, "Patterns of Absurdity in Invisible Man" (Master's thesis, Atlanta University, 1971), p. 60.

"Flight Beneath Earth: The Alienation Theme in the Fiction of Fyodor Dostoevsky, Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison," by Cyrus C. Washington, is the third Atlanta University thesis used in this paper. The author discusses Ellison's treatment of the underground theme in Invisible Man. Washington likens Ellison's novel to Dostoevsky's Notes from Underground, saying: "Ellison's novel is basically divided into two parts, precisely as is Dostoevsky's rendition. While there is a prologue, an epilogue, and a novel proper to make up Invisible Man, the prologue and the epilogue are one and the same, since they both describe the narrator's present condition. In fact, the narrator (the invisible man) says himself in the prologue that "the end is in the beginning." (p. 9) Ultimately, at the conclusion of the novel proper, he states: "The end was in the beginning." (p. 484) Thus, Ellison's prologue and epilogue are analogous to Dostoevsky's part I in Notes from Underground.¹⁴⁸ From the numerous critical works on Invisible Man discussed above, it is clear that critics find the book a complex and exceptionally vital book.

James Baldwin is another of the authors included in the course. Five critical books were located for use in this paper in interpreting him. James Baldwin: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Kenneth Kinnamon, is one of the critical books significant to this study because

¹⁴⁸Cyrus C. Washington, "Flight Beneath Earth: The Alienation Theme in the Fiction of Fyodor Dostoevsky, Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison" (Master's thesis, Atlanta University, 1974), p. 89.

it gives a chronology of important dates in the life of Baldwin. It also gives his life's history and a general introduction to his literary output. The book contains critical articles on a number of Baldwin's works. It also contains an extensive Baldwin bibliography. Kinnamon states that Baldwin, a ghetto child and civil rights spokesman, novelist and playwright, has been one of the foremost interpreters of the black experience. He also says that the controversial and outspoken nature of Baldwin's work has stirred up a storm of critical reaction. Kinnamon has selected a broad range of interpretations of Baldwin's life and work. Race, sex, violence, love and religion, which are the most recurrent themes in Baldwin's works, receive the scrutiny of such diverse commentators as Irving Howe and Eldridge Cleaver.

In summary, literary and social critics, black and white, explore in detail the impact, worth, and place of Baldwin as an imaginative writer and as an analyst of American racial dilemmas. The articles contained in this book which are most relevant to this paper are "James Baldwin" by Robert A. Bone and "Fathers and Sons in James Baldwin's Go Tell It On The Mountain" by Michel Fabre. Bone states that Go Tell It On The Mountain is concerned with the theme of a boy of fourteen finding himself. The plot takes place within the time span of twenty-four hours, beginning with John's awakening on his fourteenth birthday and ending with his religious conversion that evening. John is concerned with the discovery of identity through religion. Bone points out that Baldwin's protagonist discovers his identity at the end of the novel, as he finds out that:

He belongs to those armies of darkness and must forever share their pain. To the question, who am I? he can now reply "I am he who suffers, and yet whose suffering on occasion is "from time set free." And thereby he discovers his humanity, for

only man can ritualize his pain. We are now very close to that plane of human experience where art and religion intersect. What Baldwin wants us to feel is the emotional pressure exerted on the Negro's cultural forms by his exposure to white oppression. And finally to comprehend that these forms alone, through their power of transforming suffering, have enabled him to survive his terrible ordeal.¹⁴⁹

Michael Fabre analyses Go Tell It On The Mountain in a similar manner; however, he adds that the novel is also about the son's search for a father.¹⁵⁰ Another useful book on Baldwin is entitled James Baldwin: A Reference Guide by Fred L. Standley and Nancy V. Standley. Although it contains initially a list of primary works by Baldwin, the principal value of the volume consists in its chronological annotated survey of reviews, commentaries and interpretations of his works. It also lists significant monographs and dissertations in English and in several foreign languages. The guide covers the period from Go Tell It On The Mountain (1953) to the end of 1978.¹⁵¹

Carolyn Wedin Sylvander, in a book entitled James Baldwin, lists in chronological order the various works of Baldwin. Sylvander also discusses a number of them, including Go Tell It On The Mountain. She asserts that this novel "remains an extremely powerfully, highly textured, repeatedly intriguing book."¹⁵² One reason for its significance is its

¹⁴⁹Robert A. Bone, "James Baldwin," in James Baldwin: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Kenneth Kinnamon (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), pp. 37-38.

¹⁵⁰Michael Fabre, "Fathers and Sons in James Baldwin's Go Tell It On The Mountain," in *Ibid.*, p. 120.

¹⁵¹Fred L. Standley and Nancy V. Standley, James Baldwin: A Reference Guide (Boston: G. K. Hall and Co., 1980), pp. 1-10.

¹⁵²Carolyn Wedin Sylvander, James Baldwin (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1980), p. 44.

Biblical allusions and religious imagery. "One not thoroughly familiar with the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, or with traditional hymns and prayers, particularly of American black churches, will miss many of the allusions."¹⁵³

Louis H. Pratt's critical work entitled James Baldwin is important because it provides a chronology of important dates and events in the life of Baldwin similar to Sylvander's. In addition to this, Pratt discusses themes in Go Tell It On The Mountain. These include the themes of escape, fear and divine wrath. One of the dominant motifs recurring throughout the novel is that of escape, says Pratt. For example, early in the novel John whispers to Ruth that she should grow up and run away to a faraway place. Similarly, after Gabriel strikes Elizabeth during the confusion surrounding Roy's accident, John feels the need to take flight. Florence's youthful desire is to escape the sordid, desolate life led by black people. Closely related to the motif of escape, says Pratt, is the theme of fear. All of Baldwin's characters hate; few of them are able to love. And it is precisely this failure to love which influences their concept of God as the wrathful, vindictive Supreme Being. Pratt further asserts:

For all these people, the wrath of God becomes a double-edged sword, not only capable of accomplishing their destruction, but equally able to heap misfortune upon the heads of their enemies.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁵⁴Louis H. Pratt, James Baldwin (Boston, Massachusetts: Twayne Publishers, 1978), p. 58.

Stanley Macebuh's James Baldwin: A Critical Study gives a detailed analysis of Baldwin's works and in particular his novels. Chapter three, entitled "Baldwin's Quarrel with God," deals solely with Go Tell It On The Mountain. It reveals that by the time this novel was ready for publication (1953) Baldwin had formally broken away from his church (that is, the Pentecostal Faith Church at Mount Calvary) in Harlem. It is because of Baldwin's rebellion against the church that he creates the character Gabriel Grimes (Elizabeth's husband, John's stepfather, Deacon of the Temple of the Fire Baptized) in Go Tell It On The Mountain, says Macebuh.

And it is for this reason (Baldwin's rebellion against the church) that Gabriel Grimes, in Go Tell It On The Mountain, is not simply a reluctant stepfather whose ironically questionable claim to redemption turns him into an egocentric villain, but, more significantly, a personification of the vengeful God of Baldwin's fundamentalist Christian imagination. John Grimes both hates and fears God, but he fears and hates his father with even greater intensity. ...John's quarrel with God is, then, rendered dramatically plausible through his quarrel with his stepfather, and the creative justification for this painful relationship is proved through the suggestion that the failure of love is at the root of John's alienation.¹⁵⁵

Macebuh also distinguishes four major categories of love in Go Tell It On The Mountain:

There is the 'erotic' definition (Elizabeth and Richard) that is presented with some degree of sympathy, but as having also the least chance of success. (It is conceivable that Baldwin's dark puritan imagination felt rather uneasy about so carnal a love.) There is also the homosexual definition (John and Elisha), the familial definition (Gabriel and John, Gabriel and Elizabeth; Gabriel and Florence), and, finally, what may be termed social love--much closer to 'agape' but

¹⁵⁵Stanley Macebuh, James Baldwin: A Critical Study (New York: Third Press, Joseph Okpaku Publishing Co., Inc., 1973), p. 52.

dealing specifically with the failure of human relationships in society.¹⁵⁶

Various critical articles on Go Tell It On The Mountain were used in this study. These include Harvey Curtis Webster's "Community of Pride: A Review of James Baldwin's Go Tell It On The Mountain."¹⁵⁷ Webster thinks that this novel is of considerable distinction because it is written very skillfully and because Baldwin's portrayal of characters like John Grimes, the protagonist, is superb. Webster also remarks that Baldwin's use of the flashback technique is powerful.

Another critical article is by Jerry H. Bryant, entitled "Wright, Ellison, Baldwin--Exorcising the Demon."¹⁵⁸ Bryant comments on both the themes and techniques of Go Tell It On The Mountain. He states that the poetic powers, such as the metaphorical mode, are those through which Baldwin's greatest abilities appear. The poetic powers are so vivid and so dramatic that the readers can feel the impact of the conversion of John Grimes as if it were a real-life event happening there and then, Bryant seems to suggest. Bryant also believes that there are three categories of love dealt with in Go Tell It On The Mountain. These are heterosexual love, the love of the brotherhood of man and homosexual love.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁵⁷Harvey Curtis Webster, "Community of Pride: A Review of James Baldwin's Go Tell It On the Mountain," in Saturday Review 36(May 1953):14.

¹⁵⁸Jerry H. Bryant, "Wright, Ellison, Baldwin--Exorcising the Demon," Phylon: The Atlanta University Review of Race and Culture, 37(June 1976):174-188.

Another article, by Shirley S. Allen, is entitled: "Religious Symbolism and Psychic Reality in Baldwin's Go Tell It On The Mountain."¹⁵⁹ Allen declares that through religious symbolism Baldwin suggests that the conversion which frees John from sin is also John's psychological initiation into maturity, which frees him from both the umbilical cord and racial hatred. As Baldwin himself puts it:

He was free...he had only to stand fast in his liberty. He was in battle no longer, this unfolding Lord's day, with this avenue, these houses, the sleeping, staring, shouting people, but had entered into battle with Jacob's angel.¹⁶⁰

Three Atlanta University theses on Baldwin were used in this study. These include Cyrus Wesley Hickson, Jr., "The White Critic and the Black Novel," mentioned above in relation to its critique of Ellison's Invisible Man. Among other themes, Hickson discusses "The White Critic and James Baldwin," in which Baldwin's various novels are studied. He points out that Baldwin's style is no doubt one of the most endearing of any American writer. Hickson sees Baldwin as "the chief architect of the eloquent sentence, the complex, interrupted flow of ideas. Baldwin constructs a sentence, not only with extensive modifiers but with frequent parenthetical expressions."¹⁶¹ An example of Baldwin's usage of eloquent sentences can be observed in the following quotation:

¹⁵⁹Shirley S. Allen, "Religious Symbolism and Psychic Reality in Baldwin's Go Tell It On The Mountain," College Language Association Journal 19(December 1975):173-199.

¹⁶⁰Ibid as quoted from James Baldwin, Go Tell it On The Mountain, (New York: Knopf, 1953), p. 24.

¹⁶¹"The White Critic and the Black Novel," p. 40.

...Yes (walking homeward through the fleeing mist, with the cold sweat standing on his brow), yet in vanity and the pride of conquest, he thought of her, of her smell, the heat of her body beneath his hands, of her voice, and her tongue, like the tongue of a cat, and her teeth, and her swelling breast, and how she moved for him, and held him, and labored with him, and how they fell, trembling and groaning, and locked together, into the world again. And, thinking of this, his body freezing with his sweat, and yet altogether violent with the memory of lust, he came to a tree on a gentle rise, beyond which, and out of sight, lay home, where his mother lay.¹⁶²

Another thesis, by Eliza Marcella Young, is entitled "The Search for Identity in the Works of James Baldwin."¹⁶³ Young says that Baldwin's foremost character and hero John Grimes is concerned with the discovery of identity through religion. She is, however, not fully satisfied that religion can serve as the basis for black identity. She does not, however, suggest, like many other writers, the answer to self-identity.

Bennie Phelps Sherwood's thesis entitled "Baldwin and the Black Religious Experience in the Urban Ghetto"¹⁶⁴ discusses the basis and causes of Baldwin's attitude toward black urban religious practices and beliefs. The total effect of Christianity on the masses of ghetto blacks plays a major role in Baldwin's fiction and essays. Looking at Go Tell It On The Mountain, she says that the effect of religion has been debilitating and confusing to poor city blacks, according to

¹⁶²James Baldwin, Go Tell it On The Mountain (New York: Dell Publishing Company, Inc., 1953), pp. 95-96.

¹⁶³Eliza Marcella Young, "The Search for Identity in the Works of James Baldwin" (Master's thesis, Atlanta University, 1967).

¹⁶⁴Bennie Phelps Sherwood, "Baldwin and the Black Religious Experience in the Urban Ghetto" (Master's thesis, Atlanta University, 1971).

Baldwin's portrayal of their experience in this novel. Sherwood points out that Baldwin creates characters who fall into three overlapping categories in Go Tell It On The Mountain, as well as in others of his works. These are the church hypocrite, the unsophisticated true believer and the wayward sinner or non-believer.

Paule Marshall is the final author to be studied in this paper. The following is a review of literature about her and about her work Brown Girl, Brownstones. It is significant to note that Marshall, who also produces a novel with a feminine protagonist, is the only female novelist covered in this study.

No critical book on either Marshall the author or her novel has been located. However, articles on both from various journals are available. Most of them note that the novel is about immigrant blacks of West Indian origin living in New York. As one unnamed critic points out in a New York Herald Tribune Book Review: "The 'brown girl' of the book's title is Selina Boyce, daughter of Deighton Boyce and Silla Boyce, Negro immigrants from the island of Barbados. The 'brownstones' are the once socially desirable houses in a section of Brooklyn which this group has moved into. The story is mainly about the Boyces, but touching their lives closely are a score of other characters who share their background and their problems."¹⁶⁵

Another anonymous review article, in the New Yorker, adds that one of the themes is the nostalgia of the Boyce family for their West Indies home. That author, pointing out that the story begins shortly

¹⁶⁵ Anonymous, review of Brown Girl, Brownstones, by Paule Marshall, in New York Herald Tribune Book Review (August 6, 1959), p. 5.

before the Second World War and continues for about ten years, finds that it reflects some of the effects of that war on some of the Barbadian immigrants in the United States at that time, as observed in the Boyce family.¹⁶⁶

"Search of Status in Paule Marshall's First Book: Brown Girl, Brownstones," by Henrietta Buckmaster, is another article that has been utilized in this paper. Buckmaster states that this novel is filled with human beings, their capacity to love, to make mistakes and to cling to some ideal of life. Also, she says that mothers (females) in this story are all strong, while fathers (men) are weak by design. The point being made here is that Marshall is interested in the theme of women's liberation, and thus Brown Girl, Brownstones shows that women can be stronger than men in certain ways.¹⁶⁷ That view of the novelist is held also by Alexis DeVeaux, who in her article "Paule Marshall in Celebration" points out that "Paule Marshall, in her novels and short stories, has been a pioneer, creating diverse images of us as intelligent, capable women."¹⁶⁸ In "Dominant Themes and Technique in Paule Marshall's Fiction," Leela Kapai says that some of the major themes in Marshall's works concern the identity crisis, the race problem, the importance of tradition for black Americans and the need for sharing to achieve meaningful relationships. Looking at Brown Girl, Brownstones

¹⁶⁶Anonymous, review of Brown Girl, Brownstones, by Paule Marshall, in the New Yorker, September 19, 1959, p. 191.

¹⁶⁷Henrietta Buckmaster, "Search for Status in Paule Marshall's First Book: Brown Girl, Brownstones," Saturday Review August 29, 1959, p. 14.

¹⁶⁸"Paule Marshall in Celebration," Essence 10(May 1971):76-77.

specifically, Kapai says that closely connected with the question of personal identity is that of race: "The racist attitude of white Americans looms large in the background. Selina's cry of anguish voices the feelings of all people of all minorities. Her desire for violence, to grab the cane and rush into some store on Fulton Street and avenge that wrong by bringing it smashing across the white face behind the counter, is not uncommon too."¹⁶⁹ Commenting on Marshall's techniques, Kapai says that the novelist's concern has always been not only with content, what is being said, but also with the way it is being said, style. This concern shows in Marshall's craftsmanship, for she uses the old and new in Brown Girl, Brownstones. The plot of her novel is unambiguous, containing conflict and suspense to keep the reader engrossed. "But she uses liberally symbolic language to heighten the meaning; thus her stories are very often capable of being taken on different levels of meaning."¹⁷⁰ On one level, Brown Girl, Brownstones is the story of Selina's growing up, but "on another level, it is also the story of any people undergoing fundamental change and disruption,"¹⁷¹ asserts Kapai.

Some texts will be used for defining literary terms. These include: M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms,¹⁷² Karl Beckson

¹⁶⁹"Dominant Themes and Technique in Paule Marshall's Fiction," in College Language Association Journal 16(September 1972):49-50.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p.55.

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*

¹⁷²M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms. 3d ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1957).

and Arthur Ganz, Literary Terms: A Dictionary,¹⁷³ Sylvan Barnet, Morton Berman and William Burto, A Dictionary of Literary Terms¹⁷⁴ and, finally, M. M. Liberman and Edward E. Foster, A Modern Lexicon of Literary Terms.¹⁷⁵ These books are helpful in defining literary terms such as naturalism, realism, expressionism, surrealism, symbolism, metaphor, flashback and several others.

As observed above, this chapter discussed a review of secondary materials. Chapter two will discuss American fiction in the twentieth century.

¹⁷³Karl Beckson and Arthur Ganz, eds., Reader's Guide to Literary Terms: A Dictionary (New York: The Noonday Press, 1960).

¹⁷⁴Sylvan Barnet, Morton Berman and William Burto, eds., A Dictionary of Literary Terms (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960).

¹⁷⁵M. M. Liberman and Edward E. Foster, A Modern Lexicon of Literary Terms (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1968).

CHAPTER TWO

AMERICAN FICTION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

As stated earlier, the purpose of this study is to design a course in the American novel from 1900-1959 for post-secondary African students. One important aim of the course is to provide such students information on the lives of Americans, their loves, hates, joys and sorrows and, in general, their way of life as revealed in the novels. For purposes of organization, specificity, clarity and adaptation to typical curricular time constraints, eight novels were selected to meet the objectives of the course. The period 1900-1959 was chosen because of its importance in the history of the United States. For that reason, before discussing the selected novels, some general information about American fiction in the twentieth century is useful. Various developments shaped the fiction during the time. The novel, like most other twentieth-century American literature, brought with it, for example, direct reflections of the disturbing impact of industrialization and urbanization on old ways of life. It also brought new definitions of reality, both scientific and philosophical, that the nineteenth century had been formulating at the expense of orthodox beliefs. "Experimental psychology had opened a new approach to the operations of the consciousness and then, through the influence of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung,

revealed the inherent drama of the sub-conscious."¹ During this period there was also the convulsion of two devastating World Wars. In addition, in the United States the nineteen-twenties witnessed the rise of black consciousness and the Harlem Renaissance, which was then cut short by the Great Depression, which arrived near the end of the decade.

The industrial revolution, which was caused largely by the application of mechanical power to industry, reached its height in the United States during the late 1800's and brought about significant changes in American society. The "industrial revolution" is a term generally applied to the extraordinary transformation in the methods of production, transportation and communication through the substitution of mechanical manufacture for hand labor. The vital change was from the age of tools to the age of machines. The modern industrial system functions in a power age in which power machinery is used to produce great quantities of products quickly and cheaply. The term "industrial revolution" was first put into academic circulation by Arnold Toynbee (1852-1883), English social reformer and economist. According to Toynbee, asserts Flinn:

The essence of the industrial revolution is the substitution of competition for the medieval regulations which had previously controlled the production and the distribution of wealth... coming to the facts of industrial revolution, the first thing that strikes us is the far greater rapidity which marks the growth of population. Next we notice the relative and positive decline in the agricultural population. Passing to manufactures, we find here the all-prominent fact to be the

¹"Introduction" to Psychoanalysis and American Fiction, edited and with an introduction by Irving Malin (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1965), p. 15.

substitution of the factory for the domestic system, the consequence of the mechanical discoveries of the time.²

Toynbee further said that "the slowly dissolving framework of medieval industrial life was suddenly broken in pieces by the mighty blows of the steam engine and the power loom."³

Flinn says that both the European countries and the United States took fullest advantage of industrialization:

The American Revolution stimulated production in the United States. At the outbreak of the Civil War, new industrial methods and techniques were well established in the north. Among the factors responsible for the progress of industrial revolution in the United States were a wealth of natural resources, rapid improvements in transportation and communication facilities, huge supplies of capital for investment, protective tariffs, and a large labor supply. By the middle of the nineteenth century, American-made machines began to be imported into Europe. The special contribution of the United States to the industrial revolution was the mass production of standardized articles by means of machines to make the machine.⁴

Socially, the industrial revolution released forces that gradually transformed American civilization from rural to urban, which inevitably led to the concentration of labor-classes in factory areas and urban slums. Overcrowded and insanitary housing and the terrible working conditions created by rapid industrialization in the cities were other results of the revolution. As one of the universally acknowledged great historians states:

²M. W. Flinn, The Origins of the Industrial Revolution (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1966), pp. 3-4, quoted from Arnold Toynbee, America and the World Revolution (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984), pp. 85-86.

³Ibid.

⁴M. W. Flinn, The Origins of the Industrial Revolution, p. 4.

In all quarters of the world, advanced and backward alike, the cities are now growing on a scale and at a pace that already foreshadows a future in which the now still-separate cities will all have coalesced into one global megalopolis. This world-wide process of urbanization is the effect of several causes, some of them technological, some economic, some psychological.

In the United States, for example, only five percent of the population is engaged in agriculture today. The other 95 percent are not wanted on the land and must seek their livelihood in some urban occupation.⁵

Industrialization also brought about periods and locations of severe "structural unemployment," as men were replaced by machines. It also led to the decline of "real wages" in many unskilled or low-skilled occupations. It resulted in a long series of depressing social conditions--brutal working conditions, child labor and slums. The early factories, built without consideration for the health and comfort of the workers, lacked adequate ventilation, heating or sanitary facilities. Safety devices were rare. The workers were mercilessly exploited and received unbelievably low wages. "Highly scandalous was the employment of women and children."⁶

As a result of such industrialization, there was a consequent weakening of rural social values in contrast to "new" urban values, especially on the job. For example, "workers had to adjust to ... new cold and impersonal relationships."⁷ The revolution is a significant

⁵Arnold J. Toynbee, Change and Habit: The Challenge of Our Time (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 203.

⁶Hugh Lancelot Beales, The Industrial Revolution, 1870-1950, An Introductory Essay (London: Kelley and Millman, 1958), p. 1.

⁷Robin Martin Reeve, The Industrial Revolution, 1750-1950 (London: University of London Press, 1971), pp. 14-15.

historical situation and must be considered in the study of the twentieth-century American novels which reflect some of its effects. As one writer sums up:

If the industrial revolution had meant no more than a series of technical improvements, and if its consequences had not gone beyond changes in machinery and production, it would only have been an event of secondary importance and would not occupy much space in general history. But through the medium of material things, which are the visible expressions of the needs, designs and activities of men, it reacted on man himself. It set its stamp, first in England and then in all civilized countries, on the whole of modern society. To admit this is not necessarily to accept without reserve the materialistic interpretation of history. Whether we look at society from the outside and as a whole, as composed of a population whose growth and distribution follow definite laws, or whether we study its internal structure, with the formation, functions and relationships of its various classes, on all sides we find traces of this great movement which in changing the system of production changed at the same time all the conditions of life for the whole society.⁸

American novelists of the twentieth century accordingly began to look at the pressing social problems which had been brought about by industrialism. Industrial-revolution issues which are treated in the American novel include the transformation of American society from rural to urban. They also include the terrible factory conditions experienced by the workers, their overcrowded and insanitary living conditions, their low wages and the problem of unemployment. City life and its characteristics are generally reflected in the current American fiction. A good example of this is Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie (1900). Materialistic values are related to city life and to Sister Carrie because it is in the city that there is great stress on material

⁸Paul Mantoux, The Industrial Revolution in the Eighteenth Century (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1961), p. 341.

accumulation. "Money is exposed as the great motivating purpose of life in the United States. Money determines the degree of human comfort one may enjoy, the measure of prestige one may claim, and the extent of social power one may command."⁹ In all of Sister Carrie there is not one character who is not determined by economic status. In the city of Chicago, one sees the "cold reality" of life in the city revealed. When Carrie arrives at her sister's meager Chicago flat, she feels "cold reality taking her by the hand."¹⁰ Even her own sister and her brother-in-law are cold to her: "To Carrie, the one relief of the whole day would have been a jolly home, a sympathetic reception, a bright supper table, and someone to say: 'Oh, well, stand it a little while. You will get something better.' But now this was ashes." (pp. 56-57) Several other people are cold to Carrie, including the manager at the department store where she seeks a job. "'Well?' he said coldly. The greeting drove all courage from her at once. 'Do you need any help?' she stammered. 'No,' he replied abruptly, and turned upon his heel." (p. 24) The ladies in the department stores are indifferent and unfeeling towards her. "She (Carrie) noticed too, with a touch at the heart, the fine ladies who elbowed and ignored her, brushing past in utter disregard of her presence." (pp. 26-27)

Unsanitary and other terrible working conditions, hard labor and low wages are also reflected in Sister Carrie. When Carrie got a job in

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Theodore Dreiser, Sister Carrie (New York: New American Library, 1900), p. 15. All subsequent quotations from this text will be cited by page numbers from this edition.

a large shoe factory she was paid low wages which could not cover her living expenses. Carrie's wages were only \$4.50 a week, out of which she had to pay four dollars board and room to her sister. Besides, she worked under horrible conditions. The "room was hot. She was uncomfortable on her stool." (p. 39) As Dreiser puts it:

Under better material conditions, this kind of work would not have been so bad, but the new socialism which involves pleasant working conditions for employees had not then taken hold upon manufacturing companies.

The place smelled of the oil of machines and the new leather--a combination which, added to the stale odors of the building, was not pleasant even in cold weather. The floor, though regularly swept every evening, presented a littered surface. Not the slightest provision had been made for the comfort of the employees, the idea being that something was gained by giving them as little and making the work as hard and unremunerative as possible. (p. 41)

Thus the city, a creation of the industrial revolution, is reflected in Sister Carrie. The novel also deals with a small-town girl moving to a big city (Chicago), a theme which reflects one of the impacts of the revolution. Some other novels studied in this paper also depict the theme of huge cities, and hence of urban life. These include Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man, James Baldwin's Go Tell It On the Mountain and Paule Marshall's Brown Girl, Brownstones. In Ellison's novel, set partly in New York, the hero assumes a series of roles: a young man seeking employment, a semi-skilled laborer, the Harlem leader of the Brotherhood and a speaker on women's rights. "Blind to the potential of freedom, he is manipulated by an anti-union fanatic, a psychiatrist, a higher official in the Brotherhood and a black nationalist. Thus the order of events in New York is senseless. Later the protagonist accepts the idea that that senseless order represents the absurd logic of his

life."¹¹ Similarly, Baldwin's novel is set in urban centers of New York and Chicago. In that novel the cities were pictured as rich, civilized and offering many opportunities in the job market, in education and in other areas. Hence some characters, like Elizabeth in Go Tell It On The Mountain, leave the rural area for New York with the hope of a better life. "Her (Elizabeth's) pretext for coming to New York was to take advantage of the greater opportunities the north offered colored people; to study in a northern school; and to find a better job than any she was likely to be offered in the south."¹² Later, "she found a job as chambermaid in the same hotel in which her boyfriend Richard worked as elevator boy. Richard said that they would marry as soon as he had saved some money. But since he was going to school at night and made very little money, their marriage, which she had thought of as taking place as soon as she arrived, was planned for a future that grew ever more remote." (p. 162) Richard later falls foul of white society, is wrongfully accused of a crime, is acquitted by Elizabeth's efforts, but ends by committing suicide. Elizabeth finds violence and much "corruption" in the city. She finds herself in a world of women who were "hard-drinking, hard-talking, with whisky-and cigarette-breath, and women who knew what sweet violence might be acted out under the moon and the stars...." (p. 163) She also encountered different types of men-- "black, brown, and beige, who looked on her with lewd, and lustful, and

¹¹Irving Howe, review of Invisible Man, by Ralph Ellison, in Nation, 10 May 1952, P. 454.

¹²James Baldwin, Go Tell It On The Mountain (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1953), P. 162. All subsequent quotations from this text will be cited from this edition, unless otherwise noted.

"black, brown, and beige, who looked on her with lewd, and lustful, and laughing eyes. And these were Richard's friends. Not one of them ever went to church--." (p. 163) They were all involved in violence, illicit sex and other behavior opposed by the church. "They all seemed to be saying, as Richard, when she once timidly mentioned the love of Jesus, said: 'You can tell that puking bastard to kiss my big black ass.'" (p. 163) Thus, from her experiences both in the south and in the north, Elizabeth found that there was not much difference between the two. "She, in her terror on hearing this (Richard's friends cursing God), had wept; yet she could not deny that for such an abundance of bitterness there was a positive fountain of grief. There was not, after all, a great difference between the world of the north and that of the south which she had fled; there was only this difference: the north promised more. And this similarity: What it promised it did not give, and what it gave, at length and grudgingly, with one hand, it took back with the other." (p. 163)

As in the above three novels, the theme of urban life is reflected in Brown Girl, Brownstones. This novel pictures the life of Barbadian immigrants who emigrated to the United States between 1900 and 1940 in order to escape the brutal colonial exploitation of blacks in the West Indies. As Mary Helen Washington puts it: "Like a dark sea nudging its way into a white beach and staining the sand, they (Barbadians) flooded into America, but especially into New York City, the place they called, 'The City of the Almighty Dollar,' a place where any smart, hard-working Bajan could make enough money to 'buy house.' The extraordinary pull of New York was its image as a place of immense wealth and unlimited opportunity available to anyone with a business

mind and an unshakeable determination to 'study the dollar' and imitate the whites."¹³ Thus one of the characters in that novel, Silla Boyce, plans to work hard, night and day, buy a house, rent out every room and earn profits from her business in New York City.

As one vital result of the effects of the industrial revolution on various human beings, the novelists wrote with either realism or naturalism, trying to understand the pressing social problems which the revolution had brought about.

The First World War (1914-1918) is another significant development which influenced American literature greatly. As a matter of fact, the period 1919-1939 has been termed the time of "The American novel between the wars"¹⁴ because within the first five decades of the twentieth century there were two great wars, namely World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939-1945). Most of the novelists who were first published during this period were born towards the end of the nineteenth century and grew up in the years America was confident, powerful and reaching maturity as a world power.

The world these writers had grown up in had been thrown into turmoil and confusion. The future was uncertain. "Disillusioned and bitter, many of them moved to Europe, disgusted with the American

¹³Mary Helen Washington, "Afterword," in Brown Girl, Brownstones by Paule Marshall (New York: The Feminist Press, 1959), p. 311.

¹⁴Frederick Hoffman, The Modern Novel in America 1900-1950 (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951), p. 89.

provincialism. They were disappointed because of the effects of the First World War."¹⁵

Thus, the truth of the matter is that the First World War seriously affected people's lives, including those in the United States. "It took the lives of twice as many men as all major wars from 1790 through 1913 combined. The war was very expensive, costing more than \$337 billion dollars."¹⁶ Some of the money was spent on food, medication and clothing. That was because as "a result of the First World War, there was a shortage of various items such as food in certain countries. Consequently, the United States contributed large amounts of food, clothing and medicine."¹⁷ After the war, the allies formed the League of Nations (1920-1946), an association which was established to promote international cooperation and peace and which was later succeeded by the United Nations. The United States did not join the League. That meant that gaining peace, which had been one of the aims of the war, was not been achieved after the conflict. "The consequences of the First World War and the problem of adjustment to peace led to unrest in almost every nation."¹⁸ The impact of the war shattered a cultural universe and in the United States shaped the literature (novel)

¹⁵Stanley Cooperman, World War I and the American Novel (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), p. 91.

¹⁶Ross Gregory, The Origins of American Intervention in the First World War (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1971), pp. 24-25.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Herbert J. Bass, ed., America's Entry Into World War I: Submarines, Sentiment, or Security? (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), p. 8.

of a generation. "The American novel of the post-World War I period was not simply influenced by the war but in a vital sense created by it."¹⁹ Most significant examples in this category are F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby and Ernest Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises. These two novels reflect the horror, frustration and boredom experienced by many Americans in the post World War I era. Horror here refers to the current fearful or frightened atmosphere among the people of the United States, which had been created by the fighting and hostilities of the war. Boredom refers to the lack of desire in the people to engage in any meaningful work, jobs or duties, since they had become unsure of the future because of the war. Although the war had not taken place in the United States, the fact that some Americans participated in it affected the lives of most of the people left at home. Most of them largely involved themselves in leisure activities and violence. Leisure activities include relaxation, recreation and resting in a vacation-like atmosphere, as opposed to working or toiling, as well as fishing, eating, bathing, drinking, and dancing, which are also depicted in Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises (1926), a post-World War I novel chosen for study in this paper.

There was also social disintegration in the United States in the post-World War I period. Social disintegration refers to an increasing departure from accepted moral values; for example, some people no longer took the institution of marriage seriously. That fact is evidenced in The Great Gatsby in the character of Tom Buchanan, Daisy Buchanan's

¹⁹Stanley Cooperman, World War I and the American Novel, pp. 193-194.

husband, who has a mistress by the name of Myrtle Wilson, the wife of George Wilson. "That lively yet deeply moral novel centers around the wealthy bootlegger, Jay Gatsby, and gives a penetrating portrait of the moral emptiness of wealthy American society in the 1920's."²⁰ The novel reflects the materialism, class-consciousness, moral collapse, rampant gossip, parties and hypocrisy of the American society which existed just after the First World War and throughout the 1920's. All the varied occurrences which it reflects are evidence of social disintegration. The novel thus reflects the "lost generation." (1918-1929) Similarly, Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises reflects the sum of the consequences of the First World War for the American people at home and for the American soldiers who served in the war. For instance, it is the aspect of the war which is responsible for Jake Barne's injury in The Sun Also Rises. On the battlefield Jake was given no opportunity for choice, no situation in which he could behave courageously, and it was in that setting that he lost his physical manhood. In The Sun Also Rises Jake attempts to construct a new definition of "manhood" and to create a new set of values encompassing a new sense of truth and honor for himself. Thus, here the novel expresses Hemingway's belief that what counts most is the dignity and courage with which man faces his fate, even such as that caused by the war. The war and its aftermath also led to the great economic depression of the 1930's.

The depression was a worldwide business slump which brought about pressing social problems not only for the people of the United States,

²⁰Richard Chase, The American Novel and Its Tradition (New York: Gordian Press, 1978), p. 162.

but also for most other people in the world. The period ranked as the most widespread and longest time of high unemployment and low business activity in the modern era. "Stock values in the United States dropped rapidly. Thousands of stockholders lost all their financial and material resources. Many people had to depend on the government or charity for necessities. Severe human suffering became a reality for millions of Americans."²¹ Many died of diseases resulting from malnutrition. Thousands lost their homes. "As a result, social criticism grew more intense during the Great Depression of the 1930's."²² For instance, The Grapes of Wrath, by John Steinbeck (1902-1968), stands out as one of the most powerful novels of social protest in American literature. It describes the suffering of the "Okies" as they traveled from Oklahoma to California during the Great Depression. "Okies" refers to the migratory agricultural workers, especially those who were forced to migrate from Oklahoma or other areas of the Great Plains because of drought, farm foreclosure and other causes or consequences of the depression. Many causes contributed to making the depression as severe as it was. During the 1920's many bank failures, together with low incomes among farmers and factory workers, helped set the stage for the depression. Uneven distribution of income among workers also contributed to the slump. Most economists agree that the stock market crash of 1929 marked the beginning of the depression. It ended after major industrial nations

²¹Albert V. Romasco, The Poverty of Abundance: Hoover, the Nation, the Depression (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 4-5.

²²Harvey Swados, ed., The American Writer and the Great Depression (Indianapolis: The Bobbs Merrill Co., Inc., 1966), p. v.

increased their production of war materials at the start of the Second World War. Assessing the depression, Romasco asserts:

A depression was like a rainstorm; and a sensible man acknowledged his inability to stop the rain, sought shelter while waiting for the storm to pass, and observed philosophically that at least it was cleaning up the old mess.²³

As one critic asserts, the literature during and after the depression portrays its impact on the American people:

How is one to explain what life was like in America after the crash to those who did not live through the period? For the American people, who have never been subjected to the havoc of invasion or bombing, the depression was unquestionably the most searing experience of the twentieth century. Yet how does one convey the despair and the terror and the hope? (This anthology suggests that the literature of the era--the novels and short stories--does it better than any other source available.)²⁴

The increased production at the end of the period provided jobs and put large sums of money back into circulation, thus ending the Great Depression but bringing the destructiveness of the second great war, which killed more persons and cost more money than the First World War. Another major development, therefore, which influenced American literature was the Second World War (1939-1945). The United States entered this armed conflict in December, 1941.

In 1941 both the United States and Japan were led inexorably past the milestones on the road to war, a road that had no turning since Japan's attempt to conquer and control China met head-on Washington's pro-China policy. The fundamental cause of conflict in the Pacific was, in Samuel Eliot Morison's phase, Japan's inability to make a competent synthesis between power and responsibility.²⁵

²³Albert V. Romasco, The Poverty of Abundance: Hoover, the Nation, the Depression, p. 4.

²⁴Harvey Swados, ed., The American Writer and the Great Depression, p. v.

²⁵Hanson W. Baldwin, The Crucial Years 1939-1941: The World at War (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1976), p. 354.

The immediate cause that led to the Americans' entry into the war was Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. The United States had been very reluctant to join the war, and, as one writer puts it, "In the last analysis the United States was saved only by the Japanese miscalculation in attacking Pearl Harbor. Japan's tactical victory quickly led to strategic defeat, as the United States finally accepted the challenge of aggression."²⁶ The United States' participation had far-reaching effects:

The Second World War separates an older age of depression and reform from a newer era of affluence and political stalemate. The domestic issues of the twenties and thirties, such as the farm problem, unemployment, conservation of natural resources and collective bargaining, gave way after World War II to an entirely different set of problems ranging from loyalty and inflation to urban decay and civil rights. The war proved to be an even greater watershed in foreign policy. The isolationist-international dialogue which grew out of the fight over the League of Nations in 1919 reached its climax in the debate over the entry into World War II. United States participation in the war enabled the internationalists to humiliate their isolationist opponents and ensure a future role of American world leadership by having the country take the lead in founding the United Nations.²⁷

And as one writer puts it: "The destructive capacity of the Second World War caused major changes and developments in the United States. First and foremost, worldwide the war killed more persons and cost more money than the First World War."²⁸ The United States contributed help in terms of money and goods to Europe before becoming a war

²⁶Robert A. Divine, The Reluctant Belligerent: American Entry into World War II (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), p. 158.

²⁷Robert A. Divine, ed., Causes and Consequences of World War II (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), p. 3.

²⁸*Ibid.*

participant. Moreover, the war also brought about deficit financing or shortage in finances, since it was the most expensive war in history.

Amidst the three great tragedies, World War I, the Great Depression and World War II, writers did not stop writing. Instead, the tragedies led to increasingly critical attitudes of writers toward American life, and hence their literature portrayed how people were affected by these great events. Most of the novelists of the twenties dealt with the effects of the First World War. Among the most significant of these are Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961), who is the leading figure of the lost generation writers and perhaps the best-known writer of his time, and F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940). Another of these writers is Thomas Wolfe, whose Look Homeward Angel (1929) is also considered briefly later in this paper.

In the 1930's the American novel reflected some of the events of the 1920's, while others reflected events of the 1930's. Fitzgerald, who published Tender is the Night in 1934, continued to be significant in this decade. Although this novel was poorly received, it is a beautifully written account of the general decline of a few glamorous Americans in Europe. Some American writers of the 1930's dealt with racial problems. These include William Faulkner, one of the major American novelists of the era. In his The Sound and the Fury (1929), Light in August (1932) and Absalom! Absalom! (1936) he examined the relationships between blacks and whites.

The American novels of the 1940's and the 1950's may be studied from various perspectives. "There is first the novel of World War II, with its symptomatic indebtedness to almost all of the fictional tendencies of the previous three decades. Then there is the spectacle of the

established novelist who continued to exploit those characteristics which originally helped to establish his reputation. There is also the persistence of naturalism in fiction--a naturalism indebted both to the pioneers of the century's beginnings and to the novels of the 1930's."²⁹ Some American fiction of the 1940's and 1950's dealt with racial problems, and some with the crisis of adolescence. Finally, some novelists of the era showed a growing critical concern with form in their fiction.

In this study, between 1940-1960 the chosen novels are William Faulkner's Intruder in the Dust (1948), J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye (1951), Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man (1952), James Baldwin's Go Tell It On the Mountain (1953) and Paule Marshall's Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959).

In addition to the various developments discussed above, which shaped the first exemplars of the twentieth-century American novel, the ideas of various philosophers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries also helped shaped the novel during and beyond this period.

Charles Darwin (1809-1882) was a British naturalist who became famous for his theories concerning evolution. Like several other scientists before him, Darwin believed that through millions of years all species of plants and animals had evolved from a few common ancestors. He set forth his theories in his book On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life (1859).

²⁹Frederick J. Hoffman, The Modern Novel in America, 1900-1950 (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951), p. 171.

He gathered facts that supported the idea of evolution, and he proposed that evolution occurred through a process called natural selection. By natural selection Darwin meant the process by which all species of plants and animals developed from earlier forms by hereditary transmission of slight variations in successive generations, and that the forms which survive are those that are best adapted to the environment.³⁰

Darwin's theories shocked most people of his day, who believed that each species had been created by a separate divine act. His book presented facts that disputed that belief. It caused a revolution in biological science and greatly affected religious thought. Many people thought Darwin had implied that human beings were descended from monkeys, and they angrily criticized his revolutionary ideas. "Nevertheless, such noted British scientists as Thomas Henry Huxley and Alfred Russell Wallace supported Darwin's work and many groups eventually accepted his theories."³¹ Those theories, and the facts that support them, gave biologists new insight into the origin of living things and the relationships between various species. Darwin's ideas, with some modifications, are still basic to the study of biology.

Darwin did not discuss the sociological implications of his work. Various others, however, used his ideas in developing their own theories about society. For example, the German-Jewish philosopher Karl Marx compared "the struggle for survival among organisms to the struggle for power among social classes."³² Certain other writers referred to

³⁰Gertrude Himmelfarb, Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1959), p. 385.

³¹Ibid.

³²Karl Marx, A Critique of Political Economy (New York: The Modern Library, 1906), pp. 1-2.

the theory of natural selection to justify the concept of the development of superior races of human beings. In a book entitled Primitive Man and His Ways, Kaj Birket-Smith "studies different peoples, such as the Australian aborigines, not simply as people but as uncivilized, atavistic people."³³ Similarly, in a book entitled The Last Cannibals Jens Bjerre, a famous young Danish explorer, writes a vivid account of day-by-day life among what he calls the "primitive tribes of Australia and New Guinea."³⁴ Thus the theory of natural selection was used by writers such as these to justify the concept of superior races versus primitive races.

Some scholars called social Darwinists used Darwin's ideas to promote the belief that people in a society must compete for survival. Included among them is Edward O. Wilson, who asserts: "Individuals within populations vary in their genetic composition and thus in their ability to survive and reproduce. Those that are most successful pass more hereditary material to the next generation, and as a result the population as a whole progressively changes to resemble the types."³⁵ Richard Hofstadter, another of these writers, holds the same view.

Charles Darwin's ideas also influenced many literary figures, including some of the twentieth-century American novelists included in

³³Kaj Birket-Smith, Primitive Man and His Ways: Patterns of Life in Some Native Societies (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1957), p. 2.

³⁴Jens Bjerre, The Last Cannibals (New York: Drake Publishers Inc., 1974), p. 3.

³⁵Edward Osborne Wilson, On Human Nature (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 79.

this study. Examples of these are Theodore Dreiser in Sister Carrie and Ralph Ellison in Invisible Man, to name but two.

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) is one of the philosophers whose ideas have greatly influenced some others. The American novelists included in this study who read Spencer's ideas include Theodore Dreiser. Dreiser specifically mentions Herbert Spencer in Sister Carrie.

For all the liberal analysis of Spencer and our modern naturalistic philosophers, we have but an infantile perception of morals. There is more in the subject than mere conformity to a law of evolution. It is yet deeper than conformity to things of earth alone. It is more involved than we, as yet, perceive. (p. 90)

Spencer is noted for his attempt to work out a philosophy based on scientific discoveries of his day which could be applied to all subjects. In his work entitled Programme of a System of Synthetic Philosophy (1862-1898) Spencer applied his fundamental law--the idea of evolution--to biology, psychology, sociology and other fields. He also discussed political matters.

In his work on biology Spencer traced the development of life from its lowest recognizable form to modern man. He believed that the great law of nature is the constant action of forces which tend to change all forms, from the simple to the complex. Spencer explained that the mind of man has developed in the same way, advancing from the simple, automatic responses of lower animals to the reasoning process of thinking man.

Spencer claimed that knowledge was of two kinds. One is that knowledge which is gained by the individual; the other is the knowledge gained by the race. He said that intuition, or knowledge acquired unconsciously, was the inherited knowledge of experience of the race.

Spencer, then, is one of the great philosophers whose ideas have considerably influenced many literary figures, among them some of the novelists in this study, including Dreiser. As will be seen later,

handicapped by poverty, narrow religious training, and a dreamer's temperament, Dreiser was unprepared for the inevitable hurly-burly of earning a living, and various experiences disillusioned him deeply by revealing an amoral world that contradicted the teachings of his childhood. It was the chance reading of Herbert Spencer in 1884 which crystallized this disillusionment for Dreiser into a philosophy which envisioned men as helpless victims of natural forces, and when he also discovered Balzac, he perceived how this philosophy might be expressed in fiction.³⁶

In fact, he vitalized it in his fiction.

Besides philosophers' ideas, those of psychologists were also incorporated into twentieth-century fiction. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) were psychologists of vital influence upon the novelists.

Sigmund Freud was an Austrian physician who is widely known as the founder of psychoanalysis. His impact upon psychiatry and psychology has been enormous.

He emphasized the powerful unconscious and irrational forces which motivate and shape man's behavior and developed a pessimistic image of man as a more or less helpless victim of these forces. The influence of his ideas extends into the domains of art, literature, politics, economics, sociology, religion, anthropology and philosophy. Probably no other man has so profoundly affected the intellectual currents of the twentieth century.³⁷

³⁶Philip L. Gerber, Theodore Dreiser (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964), p. 21.

³⁷Paul Roazen, Freud: Political and Social Thought (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), p. 253.

Freud's insight, courage and scientific dedication influenced hundreds of novelists, although he himself wrote only non-fiction, including his published lectures.

The psychoanalytic studies of Sigmund Freud in Austria pointed to new areas of the personality for novelists and other writers to explore. Freud offered a formula for reevaluating the individual. Freudianism provided concepts that enabled writers to deal with men in the same scientific terms that man was learning to use in dealing with nature.³⁸

Among novelists who used some of Freud's ideas in portraying various individuals in their novels is Ralph Ellison, in his work Invisible Man.

Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), a Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist who developed analytical psychology, had significant impact upon American novelists. Like Freud, Jung's ideas on archetypes such as birth, death, rebirth, power, magic, unity, the hero, the child, God, the demon, the old wise man, the earth-mother and the animal have influenced various literary writers, including several of the twentieth-century American novelists treated in this study. These include: Baldwin in Go Tell It On The Mountain, Fitzgerald in The Great Gatsby, Hemingway in The Sun Also Rises and Salinger in The Catcher in the Rye. Thus Jung's remarkable revelation of the range of human experience and its symbolic expression assure his position as one of the most profound psychological theorists.

Realism is one of the literary movements current from 1900-1940 which shaped the American novel. Realism or a "realistic movement," which dates from the mid-nineteenth century, refers to the subject matter, as well as the techniques, by which a particular kind of

³⁸Ibid, p. 254.

literary work has been created. As one critic asserts:

In theory, the realist, wishing to record life as it is, refrains from imposing a predetermined pattern (based perhaps on a philosophic orientation) upon his materials. Instead, he allows the story "to tell itself," for truth, he feels, resides in the events themselves rather than in his imagination. Free of romantic subjectivity, realistic writing emphasizes truthfulness of detail. Realistic fiction became popular as a revolt against the sentimentality and melodrama of romantic idealism. The growing popularity of realism, however, was more than simply a reaction against the illusions which the realists felt had distorted life in the romantic novel. More fundamentally, realism has been popular for two reasons. One is the development of modern science, with its emphasis upon detailed reporting. The other is an increasing desire of writers and readers for genuine understanding of social problems.³⁹

In the United States realism was a self-conscious movement borrowed from the French and the Russians and carefully articulated by authors such as William Dean Howells, Henry James and Theodore Dreiser. Nonetheless:

Late nineteenth-century American realism was attacked in its own time for unidealized pictures of commonplace life, and for many years continued to be so characterized; in fact, however, it was neither unidealized nor--for the most part--commonplace. Rather, in its variation from these two criteria of a conventional definition of realism--that is, in its ethical idealism and in its exploration of richly diverse experience--it achieved both its vitality and its promise of future growth.⁴⁰

In addition to realism, "Naturalism also emerged as a literary movement in the late 1800's and in the 1900's."⁴¹ Naturalism originated

³⁹Clarence Arthur Brown, ed., The Achievement of American Criticism: Representative Selections from Three Hundred Years of American Criticism (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1954), pp. 375-376.

⁴⁰Donald Pizer, Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1966), p. 10.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 11.

in France with the novels and theoretical essays of the French novelist Emile Zola (1840-1902). Zola's naturalistic doctrine of the novel is that the genre reflects men's lives and actions as they are determined by heredity, environment and natural laws. Fiction, according to Zola, should be used as a laboratory in which to experiment with life under controlled conditions.⁴²

In fact, the period 1900-1959 has been sub-divided variously by different critics. The years 1900-1915 have been defined by some critics as the time of naturalism in American literature--that is, of the attempt to apply scientific theory and methods to imaginative writing. Naturalists concentrate on the physical world almost to the exclusion of the supernatural. The principles of naturalistic fiction were first stated in France by Zola in The Experimental Novel (1880).⁴³ Zola argued that novelists should treat their material as scientists treat theirs. One definition of naturalism is:

A literary movement related to and sometimes described as an extreme form of realism, but which may be more appropriately considered as a parallel to philosophic naturalism. This doctrine holds that all existent phenomena are in nature and thus within the sphere of scientific knowledge; it maintains that no supernatural realities exist.⁴⁴

Various novels and essays were written especially in France, either to defend or attack the theory of naturalism and individual

⁴²Charles Child Walcutt, Seven Novelists in the American Naturalist Tradition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963), p. 18.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Bettina L. Knapp, Emile Zola (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1980), pp. 37-38.

naturalistic novels (or works which seemed so to the critics). To illustrate the statement regarding the definition of the naturalistic tradition as one which asserts that the actions of men are determined by heredity and environment, for instance, consider a novel by the Goncourt brothers, an essay by Emile Zola and two novels also by Zola:

Carefully documenting their work, the Goncourt brothers produced Germinie Lacerteux (1865), a novel which examines in clinical detail the sordid life of a servant girl. This novel was admired by Emile Zola, the great theorist of naturalism. In his essay Le Roman Experimental ("The Experimental Novel"), dated 1880, Zola said that the novelist should be, like the scientist performing an experiment, independent of moral conventions or preconceived theories. In his novel, which is based on careful documentation, he should examine dispassionately certain phenomena and draw indisputable conclusions. Among the things that his experiments will confirm is the law that the actions of men are determined by heredity and environment. Zola carried out his theories in such novels as Therese Raquin (1868) and L'Assomoir (1877). To distinguish his work from the realism of Balzac and Flaubert, Zola called his novels "naturalistic." Although he wished by this term to characterize his theories and methods, it has often served only to denote his usual subject matter and that of his followers. Theoretically, there is no reason why the experimental or naturalistic method could not be applied to an investigation of the highest levels of society, but in fact naturalistic novels have usually concerned themselves with slums, poverty, disease, and dirt.⁴⁵

One who defines the period 1900-1915 as one of naturalism in American literature is Frederick J. Hoffman. He asserts that the pre-war naturalistic novels reflect some of the effects of the industrial revolution, and that they also reflect how the novelists' ideas had been influenced by psychology and philosophy. Hoffman declares these novels were

⁴⁵Karl Beckson and Arthur Ganz, A Reader's Guide to Literary Terms: A Dictionary (New York: The Noonday Press, 1960), p. 132-133.

...those of industrial expansion, of endless violations of democratic principles, and of apparently inevitable brutalities committed against humanity. On the one hand, inferences from science (especially those made by Herbert Spencer)⁴⁶ seemed to explain and often to condone these conditions. On the other hand, they were seen as peculiarly American, as a part of the American socio-economic history, hence at least eligible for correction and amelioration, the first and most important step of which was exposure.⁴⁷

Another important characteristic of naturalism was the portrayal of the man of force and violence, the "superman" of the American West Coast or the Arctic wastes or the sea, to whom the supertycoon of Dreiser's Cowperwood novels belongs. The "Cowperwood novels" refers to The Financier (1912), The Titan (1914) and The Stoic (1947). Given the most melancholy of naturalistic premises, that man is victim rather than master of his fate, the Cowperwood novels portrayed the superhero. The superhero entered American fiction as the servant of a melodramatic strategy.

One of the leading authors of pre-war naturalism is Dreiser. According to him, man is a mere mechanism, not to be held responsible for his behavior because he is driven by vast inner and outer compulsions over which he has no control. Dreiser was one of the first American novelists to portray men and women undergoing the hazards of earning a living under modern industrialism. The first phase of his naturalism, expounding the purposelessness of life, is the basis of his

⁴⁶Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) was a British philosopher noted for his attempt to work out philosophy based on the scientific discoveries of his day which could be applied to all subjects. (Reference: Herbert Spencer, Facts and Comments (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1910), p. v.)

⁴⁷Frederick Hoffman, The Modern Novel in America 1900-1950 , p. 31.

first novel, Sister Carrie. As Donald Pizer says: "The belief is that the naturalists were like the realists in their fidelity to the details of contemporary life, but that they depicted everyday life with a greater sense of the role of such causal forces as heredity and environment in determining behavior and belief."⁴⁸ Thus naturalism and realism are both related to one another and different. As Pizer further comments: "A naturalistic novel is thus an extension of realism only in the sense that both modes often deal with the local and contemporary. The naturalist, however, discovers in this material the extraordinary and excessive in human nature."⁴⁹ What is the theme of the novel?, one may ask. "The naturalist often describes his characters as though they are conditioned and controlled by environment, heredity, instinct or chance. But he also suggests a compensating humanistic value in his characters or their fates which affirms the significance of the individual and of his life."⁵⁰ The only American naturalist of international stature is Dreiser, whose Sister Carrie shows the two protagonists confronting the problem of adapting to their environment.

Social criticism, a literary development of the 1900's, also shaped the American novel of the twentieth century. The social critics used realism and naturalism to expose social evils and to attempt to achieve reform. Social criticism grew more intense during the Great Depression. Thomas Wolfe (1900-1938), one of the period's liveliest

⁴⁸Donald Pizer, Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature, p. 12.

⁴⁹Ibid. p. 13.

⁵⁰Ibid.

social critics, based his first novel, Look Homeward Angel (1929), on his own life. Wolfe believed that all great art is necessarily autobiographical. The story of his childhood and youth assumes symbolic significance in his four lengthy novels. His criticism of American moral values can be seen in Look Homeward Angel. Eugene Gant, the protagonist, is modeled on the author and the Gant family on the Wolfe family, while Altamont closely mirrors Asheville, North Carolina. The novel ends with Eugene's vision of his brother Ben, who tells him to look within: "You are your world."⁵¹ The book has been criticized for its overreliance on autobiography, its lack of form, and its extravagant rhetoric, but its vital humor, deep lyricism and sense of vitality make it enduring literature. In that novel, Wolfe realized the linkage between his family, their community and their times--which help to frustrate and destroy Ben, a tragic figure.

Nathanael West (1903-1940) is also one of the social critics noted for his brilliant but bitter view of modern American life. He published four short novels during a brief career that ended when he was killed in an automobile accident in 1940. He exposed the shallowness of American society in Miss Lonelyhearts (1933). "That novel is a grim satire about a newspaperman who writes a column advising people on their problems."⁵² He also articulated the ills of American society in The Day of the Locust (1939). "That novel is a fantastic and sometimes

⁵¹Thomas Wolfe, Look Homeward Angel: A Story of the Buried Life (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 520.

⁵²James F. Light, Nathanael West: An Interpretive Study (Chicago, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1961), p. 75.

nightmarish satire of life in Hollywood, where West wrote movie scripts in the 1930's."⁵³

John Dos Passos (1896-1970) is another significant social critic. In his fiction he relentlessly criticized the then-current American society. He argued for social change in the USA trilogy (1937), covering three decades of American life. That trilogy, which is comprised of The 42nd Parallel (1930), 1919 (1932) and The Big Money (1936), was both experimental in form and ambitious in scope. "In this painstakingly detailed portrait of industrial America between 1898 and 1928, he developed experimental techniques for capturing the change and disorder of the decades."⁵⁴ Dos Passos published more than forty volumes, all directly or indirectly concerned with American life. As one critic says: "John Dos Passos stands in the first rank of American writers."⁵⁵

John Steinbeck (1902-1968) became famous for his novels about poor, oppressed California farmers and laborers. His most famous work, The Grapes of Wrath (1939), won the 1940 Pulitzer Prize. In telling about the suffering of the "Okies," the novel relates how the Joad family loses its farm through a bank foreclosure. The family then makes the difficult journey to California to start a new life. It is a good example of a novel of social criticism, because in it Steinbeck tells also how the police and various employers in California mistreat the

⁵³Ibid. p. 156.

⁵⁴John H. Wrenn, John Dos Passos (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1961), p. 154.

⁵⁵"Introduction," in John Dos Passos: An Informal Memoir--The Best Time by John Dos Passos (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1966), p. 230.

Joads and other migrant families. "The Grapes of Wrath was written to arouse sympathy for the millions of poor farmers and tenants who have been brought to miserable ruin because of the development of machinery."⁵⁶ Critics at first considered The Grapes of Wrath a story of the economic crisis of the 1930's, but years later many of them realized that it depicted everyone's search for human dignity. It became a huge success and brought Steinbeck to a turning point in his career. "He became a public property and from that time on has been a hostage to fortune."⁵⁷

In addition to the literary movements and other developments described above, the Harlem Renaissance (1922-1930), a cultural movement among blacks in the United States, must be included here. During that period many writers, musicians, painters and other artistic talents emerged in various parts of the United States, and Harlem in New York City was the black cultural center. To answer the question: What was/is Harlem?, James Weldon Johnson, one of the heralds of the Harlem Renaissance, wrote a brief article entitled: "Harlem: The Culture Capital," saying,

Harlem is indeed the great mecca for the sight-seer, the pleasure-seeker, the curious, the adventurous, the enterprising, the ambitious and the talented of the whole Negro world; for the lure of it has reached down to every island of the Carib Sea and has penetrated even into Africa.

⁵⁶Martin Shockley, "The Reception of The Grapes of Wrath in Oklahoma," The Grapes of Wrath: A Casebook, edited by Agnes McNeill Donohue (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968), p. 57.

⁵⁷James Woodress, "John Steinbeck: Hostage to Fortune," quoted from in The Grapes of Wrath: A Casebook, *ibid.*, p. 283.

In the make-up of New York, Harlem is not merely a Negro colony or community; it is a city within a city, the greatest Negro city in the world. And it contains more Negroes to the square mile than any other spot on earth. I believe that the Negro's advantages and opportunities are greater in Harlem than in any other place in the country, and that Harlem will become the intellectual, the cultural and the financial center for Negroes of the United States, and will exert a vital influence upon all Negro peoples.⁵⁸

The Harlem Renaissance was inspired partly by association of blacks with European peoples and cultures during World War I. During the war some black men had served in Europe as soldiers, where they were exposed to the laws of equality, fraternity and liberty which they did not have in their home country. When they came home after the war they were still discriminated against. They adopted a view of racial solidarity, inspiring other blacks to be more aware of their rights and to fight for them. Blacks then turned to cultural expression in terms of music, dance, painting, writing and sculpture to assert black people's worth. At that time there was a major migration of blacks to the north, and many went to Harlem.

A social factor underlying the Renaissance was the black migration to the city, and nothing is more indicative of the contrast between the older black writer and the new than Dunbar's admonition to blacks, in 1902, not to flee to the northern cities to 'false ideals and unreal ambitions.' Now, in the black community of a great city, the migrant was living, for the first time, in what seemed to be almost a totally black world. The minority psychology was modified, the masks of accommodationism could be laid aside, the self could be revealed. It could even be explored.⁵⁹

⁵⁸James Weldon Johnson, "Harlem: The Culture Capital," in The New Negro: An Interpretation, edited by Alain Locke (New York: Arno Press, 1968), pp. 301-311.

⁵⁹Cleanth Brooks, R. W. B. Lewis and Robert Penn Warren, eds., American Literature: The Makers and the Making, 2 vols. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), 2:2686.

The Harlem Renaissance was also partly inspired by the national prosperity, as well as by the improving economic conditions of blacks. As the editors of American Literature say: "We might also point out as contributing to the Renaissance the growth of a black middle class, with social stability, some degree of economic independence, and increasing literacy."⁶⁰ Finally, they say:

To sum up, the middle-class black youth began to discover the beauty, vigor, and honesty of lower-class Harlem and celebrated his own blackness; or, when he simply delineated in realistic detail the life there, he was in tune not only with a general impulse in the black world, but with the advanced thought and aesthetic sensibility of the white world that was finding new virtue in the 'primitive.'⁶¹

During this period, black writers and other black artists found publishers and supporters in significant numbers.

Several significant leaders and prominent writers of the Harlem Renaissance emerged. Among them was William Edward Burghardt DuBois (1868-1963). An educator, historian and sociologist, author, and civil rights leader, DuBois was one of the most important leaders of black protest in the United States. During the first half of the 1900's he became the leading black opponent of racial discrimination. He also won fame as a historian and sociologist, emerging as one of the great scholars of his time. Scholars still use his research on black Americans. DuBois was probably the first of his race to express the idea of Pan-Africanism, "the belief that all people of African descent

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid. p. 2688.

have common interests and should work together to conquer prejudice."⁶² In 1900 he predicted that humanity's chief problem throughout the new century would be "the color line." He strongly opposed the noted black educator, Booker T. Washington. Washington believed that blacks could advance themselves faster through manual work than by achieving higher education and, ultimately, their demand for equal rights. By contrast, DuBois declared that blacks must speak out constantly against discrimination. According to him, the best way to defeat prejudice was for college-educated blacks, the talented tenth, to lead the fight against it.

After completing his education, DuBois served as professor in various universities. From 1896-1910 he was professor of sociology and economics at Atlanta University. He also served at that institution from 1934-1944 as professor of sociology. His important work The Suppression of the Slave Trade was published in 1896. Many of his ideas appear in a collection of essays called The Souls of Black Folk (1903). DuBois' other works include the following: John Brown (1909), Quest of the Silver Fleece (1911), The Negro (1915), Dark Water (1920) and Dark Princess (1928), a romance. To fight racial discrimination, DuBois, with other black and some white leaders such as "Butler Wilson, Albert E. Pillsbury, and Dr. Horace Bumstead, the then President of Atlanta University,"⁶³ founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1901.

⁶²Meyer Weinberg, ed., W. E. B. Du Bois: A Reader (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1970), pp. 392.

⁶³Charles Flint Kellogg, NAACP: A History of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 7 Vols. (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1901-1967), 1:31.

Over the years, the NAACP attempted to better the blacks' lot through 'litigation, legislation and education.' Perhaps its most significant judicial victory was won in 1954 when the historic Brown vs Board of Education case threw out the 'separate but equal' doctrine established in Plessy vs. Ferguson, thus opening the door for the elimination of segregation in public education.⁶⁴

The NAACP has clung tenaciously to its goal of promoting racial integration. The oldest and largest of the civil rights organizations, in 1910 it began to publish Crisis, a magazine which provided information on blacks who had achieved success in the arts, business and other fields and dealt with issues raised by the black experience. From 1910-1934 DuBois was editor of Crisis. "The early issues gave startling confirmation to the charge from "conservatives" that DuBois' concern for Negro rights touched the upper classes more intimately than the lower, that he was more interested in the few than in the many."⁶⁵ DuBois left the NAACP in 1934 and returned to the faculty at Atlanta University, but from 1944-1948 he again worked for the NAACP. After 1948 he became increasingly dissatisfied with the slow progress of race relations in the United States. He came to regard communism as a solution to the problems of blacks. In 1961 he joined the Communist Party and moved to Ghana, Africa, where he died on August 27, 1963, at the age of ninety-five.

DuBois' importance to the black peoples' history in American society lies in two achievements. "First, for thirty years he made

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Francis L. Broderick, W. E. B. Du Bois: Negro Leader in a Time of Crisis (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1959), p. 117.

himself the loudest voice in demanding equal rights for blacks and in turning black opinion away from the acceptance of anything less. His second achievement lies in his service to the black people's morale. When Washington was training black youth for manual work, DuBois held high the ideal of a liberal education."⁶⁶ Whereas Washington measured civilization in material terms, DuBois reminded black people of Socrates and Saint Francis. At home and abroad, DuBois' writings gave black people courage for their fight. As for the writers of the Harlem Renaissance, he encouraged them to write books about the black race and to be proud of their race.

James Weldon Johnson (1871-1939) is another dynamic leader or herald of the Harlem Renaissance. Poet and lyricist, Johnson was born in Jacksonville, Florida. He had a varied career as a teacher, author and publisher. He was admitted to the Florida bar in 1897 while living in Jacksonville. During the same year, while serving as the principal of a high school, he began writing songs with his brother, J. Rosamond Johnson, a musician. In 1900 they composed "Lift Evr'y Voice and Sing," once widely known as the "Negro National Anthem." Among the most important of Johnson's publications are: Fifty Years and Other Poems (1917), The Book of American Negro Poetry (1922), God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse (1927), Black Manhattan (1930), and Along This Way (1933). The ideas of James Weldon Johnson so greatly influenced the writers of the Harlem Renaissance that some critics think he was its herald. Johnson developed in his literary work the discovery of "black-

⁶⁶Ibid.

ness," notably in the volume called God's Trombones (1927). Here, in a series of sermons rendered as poems, Johnson celebrates the "Old Time Negro Preacher" and the sermons he himself had heard in childhood and youth. There was, as he points out in the Preface, a highly developed folk art of the pulpit; certain sermons on set themes were passed down from preacher to preacher, being elaborated and altered with each rendering, as might happen to a spiritual or a ballad.⁶⁷

Another of the significant leaders of the Harlem Renaissance was Alain Leroy Locke (1886-1954). Educator, philosopher and historian, Locke was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on September 3, 1886. After receiving his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1907 at Harvard University, he won a coveted Rhodes Scholarship, an award for two years of study at Oxford University.

After returning to America in 1912, Locke became assistant professor of English and philosophy at Howard University in Washington, D. C., where later he became head of the Department of Philosophy. Except for several leaves as an exchange professor, he remained at the university until he retired in 1953. He published his first book, Race Contacts and Inter-Racial Relations, in 1916. He was best known for his writings concerning the cultural contributions of his people. He explained the Harlem Renaissance to America in his book The New Negro: An Interpretation (1925). That book "aims to document the Negro culturally and socially to register the transformations of the inner and outer life of the Negro in America that have so significantly taken

⁶⁷"Preface" to God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse by James Weldon Johnson (New York: The Viking Press, 1927), p. 5.

place in the last few years"⁶⁸ before 1925. Locke articulates the various developments of black people, especially progress in "race literature" and "race journalism." Advancement in literature can be evidenced in the "output of such progressive race periodicals as The Crisis under the editorship of Dr. DuBois and, more recently, through the quickening encouragement of Charles Johnson, in the brilliant pages of Opportunity, a journal of Negro life."⁶⁹ In The New Negro Locke compiled various works by black writers, written in the 1920's, to demonstrate the "creative talents of the race"⁷⁰ as portrayed in the "general journalistic, literary and artistic"⁷¹ works of those writers. In conclusion, Locke asserts:

Negro life is not only establishing new contacts and founding new centers, it is finding a new soul. There is a fresh spiritual and cultural focusing. We have, as the heralding sign, an unusual outburst of creative expression. There is a renewed race-spirit that consciously and proudly sets itself apart. Justifiably, then, we speak of the offerings of this book embodying these ripening forces⁷² as culled from the first fruits of the Negro renaissance.

The New Negro is composed of various essays, fiction, poems, plays, music, all of which possess in common the fact that they assert the pride and dignity of the black race. As Locke says, these Harlem Renaissance artists had two missions:

⁶⁸Alain Locke, ed., The New Negro: An Interpretation, p. ix.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. x.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid., p. xi.

One is the consciousness of acting as the advance-guard of the African peoples in their contact with twentieth-century civilization; the other, the sense of a mission of rehabilitating the race in world esteem from that loss of prestige for which the fate and conditions of slavery have so largely been responsible. Harlem, as we shall see, is the center of both these movements; she is the home of the Negro's "Zionism."⁷³

The book includes different works of art to demonstrate that the 1920's marked for the black race a renaissance or a rebirth of the creative expressions of black writers, musicians and painters. It also emphasizes that music and poetry, and to an extent the dance, have been the predominant arts of the black American. On the other hand, it points out that in the African cultures the plastic and craft arts predominate and that "Africa is one of the great fountain sources of the arts of decoration and design."⁷⁴ One of the emphases by black artists of the Harlem Renaissance was pride in their black heritage and hence pride in African peoples and their arts. Locke thus contributed to the Harlem Renaissance both as an educator and a writer on black culture.

Countée Cullen (1903-1946) also contributed significantly to the Harlem Renaissance. He was known for his lyrical poetry on black themes. He was born Countée Porter in New York on May 30, 1903. He attended New York University, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1925. Cullen continued his education at Harvard, where he received a Master of Arts degree in 1926.

While at New York University Cullen won Phi Beta Kappa honors and the Witter Bynner poetry prize. In 1925 he completed Color, a volume of

⁷³Ibid., p. 14.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 254.

poetry which received the Harmon Foundation's first Gold Medal for Literature in 1927, thereby establishing his reputation as an artist. His other early collections include Copper Sun (1927), The Ballad of a Brown Girl (1927) and The Black Christ (1929). Cullen wrote a novel, One Way to Heaven (1932), a portrait of life in Harlem. He translated Euripides' Medea (1935) and served as an editor for two important Negro magazines of the day, Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life and The Crisis. He collected the poems by which he wished to be remembered in On These I Stand, published in 1947. He and Arna Bontemps wrote the musical play St. Louis Woman (1946). As one critic sums up:

Cullen, a conscientious, dedicated craftsman, was one of the most notable writers of the Harlem Renaissance, a period of remarkable literary achievement by black writers in New York City during the 1920's. Cullen's techniques were conventional; his models were the romantic poets, especially John Keats, whom he ardently admired. Cullen wanted to be known simply as a poet, not a black poet, and he often insisted that his poems in particular and poetry in general should be free from political or racial matters. At other times he could not escape the fact of his race. His finest poem, "Heritage," is an assertion of the black American's relationship with Africa, and he came to acknowledge that "In spite of myself, I find that I am actuated by a strong sense of race consciousness. This grows upon me." Cullen was caught between his conflicting allegiances to his art, his country, and his race, but, like other black writers after him, he managed to create a body of memorable writing out of disparate loyalties and ideologies and out of his struggles in a world that had made "a poet black, and bid him sing."⁷⁵

Cullen significantly contributed to the Harlem Renaissance as a writer on various themes, including black culture. Indeed, he was a "glittering ornament of the Harlem Renaissance."⁷⁶

⁷⁵George McMichael, ed., Anthology of American Literature: Realism to the Present, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1979-1980) 2:1312-1313.

⁷⁶"Countee Cullen" in American Literature: The Makers and the Making, eds. Cleanth Brooks et al., 2 vols. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), 2:2709.

Claude McKay (1889-1948) is yet another significant author, a poet of the Harlem Renaissance. He was born on September 15, 1889, in Claredon, Jamaica. At nineteen he joined the Jamaica Constabulary. A year later he published his first book of poems, Songs of Jamaica (1919). He wrote in the Jamaican dialect or patois. These dialect verses became popular locally and earned McKay awards from the Institute of Arts and Sciences. His poetry is noted for its lyricism and its powerful statements of black feelings. Later he studied in the United States, and in 1919 he went to Europe. While in London he published Spring in New Hampshire (1920), a volume of poetry. He returned to America and became associate editor of the Liberator, a socialist newspaper. Harlem Shadows, his widely known book of poetry, was published in 1922. McKay then went to Europe again for about a decade. During that time he wrote much prose, including such well-known books as Home to Harlem (1928), Banjo (1929), Gingertown (1932), Banana Bottom (1933), and A Long Way from Home (1937). His final work, Selected Poems, was published posthumously in 1953. Through the above-cited works Claude McKay contributed meaningfully to the Harlem Renaissance.

Langston Hughes (1902-1967), poet and short-story writer, was born in Joplin, Missouri. He attended schools in Kansas and Ohio, then travelled to Africa and Europe. Hughes is best known for his first collection of poems, The Weary Blues (1926). In these poems he expressed the despair of blacks regarding the social and economic conditions under which they lived. That despair was relieved by what he then felt was the black's only defense--sharp humor and self-control.

Hughes' later volumes, among them The Dream Keeper (1932), and his autobiographical works I Wonder as I Wander (1956) and The Big Sea (1940), articulated his experiences as a writer. His works told of blacks' growing demands for social justice. Hughes had a wide-ranging talent: he was a successful humorist and a historian of Negro life; he wrote novels, short stories, poems, children's books, song lyrics and operas. He translated foreign writers and wrote numerous plays, three of which were produced on Broadway. "Hughes was the first American Negro to support himself as a professional writer; in all, he produced more than sixty books. He was one of the first American writers to receive serious critical attention for realistic portrayals of Negroes in the United States. Through his poetry, his fiction, and his essays, he became, in the later half of the twentieth-century, one of the dominant voices speaking out for black culture in white America."⁷⁷ Despite the fact that he was honored with numerous awards throughout his life--the Harmon Gold Award for Literature (1930), a Guggenheim Fellowship for Creative Writing (1935), the Rosenwald Fellowship (1941), the Ainsfield Wolfe Award for the best book on race relations (1945), and the Spingarn Award (1960)--"Hughes' writing style caused him to be looked down upon by the academic establishment. He was never afraid to use the material and language of his people. To young black writers he said 'Do not be afraid of yourselves. You are the world.,' which

⁷⁷Frederick Crews, "Langston Hughes," in Anthology of American Literature: Realism to the Present, p. 1413.

expresses one of the great attributes of the Harlem Renaissance--that is, pride in the black race."⁷⁸ Hughes died on May 22, 1967.

Jessie Redmond Fauset (1882-1961) is one of the dynamic females of the Harlem Renaissance. She was a poet, born in Fredricksville, New Jersey. She was educated in the public schools of Philadelphia and received an A. B. degree from Cornell University in 1905, where she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. She did graduate work at the University of Pennsylvania and earned a degree at the Alliance Francaise in Paris. She taught French and Latin at Dunbar High School, Washington, beginning in 1920. For several years she was literary editor of the Crisis, but mainly her work was teaching. Her poems have appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies.⁷⁹ In her literary work Fauset mainly focused on the contributions of black people to the United States. For example, in one of her articles she speaks of one of black people's contributions to the American theater, saying: "The black man bringing gifts, and particularly the gift of laughter, to the American stage, is easily the most anomalous, the most inscrutable figure of the century. All about him, and within himself, stalks the conviction that like the Irish, the Russian and the Magyar he has some peculiar offering which shall contain the very essence of the drama. Yet the medium through which this unique and intensely dramatic gift might be offered has been so befogged and

⁷⁸Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" in A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States 1910-1932, edited by Herber Aptheker (Secaucus, N.J.: The Citadel Press, 1973), p. 526.

⁷⁹"Who's Who of the Contributors" in The New Negro: An Interpretation, pp. 416-17.

misted by popular pre-conception that the great gift, though divined, is as yet not clearly seen."⁸⁰ She is also the author of four novels: There is Confusion (1924), Plum Bun (1929), The Chinaberry Tree (1931), and Comedy: American Style (1933). Through her writing Jessie Fauset became one of the leaders of the Harlem writers who created the black literary Renaissance of the 1920's.

Arna Bontemps (1902-1973) was a significant personality of the Harlem Renaissance, editing or writing more than thirty books about black culture. His works include biography, children's stories, history, literary criticism, novels and poetry. He also edited collections of folklore and poetry with Langston Hughes.

Bontemps was born in Alexandria, Louisiana, and raised in California. He received his B. A. degree from Pacific Union College and in 1924 some of his poetry was published in Crisis magazine. "His poem 'Golgotha is a Mountain' (1926) won the Alexander Pushkin Prize and in 1927 his poem "Nocturne at Bethesda" achieved first honors in the Crisis poetry contest."⁸¹ In 1931 he wrote God Sends Sunday and in 1939 Drums at Dusk. His historical books, We Have Tomorrow (1945) and The Story of the Negro (1948), were of high literary and historical merit. From 1943 until his death, Bontemps was a professor and librarian at Fisk University, the University of Illinois and Yale University. Thus, Bontemps

⁸⁰Jessie Fauset, "The Gift of Laughter" in The New Negro: An Interpretation, p. 161.

⁸¹"Preface" to Great Slave Narratives, selected and with a preface by Arna Bontemps (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 1.

contributed to the Harlem Renaissance as a literary artist and a writer on black culture, as well as an educator.

Jean Toomer (1894-1967) also emerged as one of the great writers of the Harlem Renaissance. Toomer was born in Washington, D.C. He studied law at the University of Wisconsin and the City College of New York. In 1923 he published Cane, a mixture of poems and sketches, short stories and novelettes about blacks living in the north and south. Cane is touched with symbol and myth, a quality which was congenial to the contemporary mood of mysticism. "It has been called one of the best books ever written by a black American. Toomer was also a frequent contributor to The Little Review, Secession, The Double Dealer, Broom, Opportunity, The Crisis and other literary magazines dealing with black life and values."⁸²

Carl Van Vechten (1880-1964), although white and of Dutch extraction, is significant to the Harlem Renaissance because he wrote various books and articles about black people of the time. In "The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed?," an article published in The Crisis, XXI (1926) (p. 219), he studied closely some aspects of the black mind, saying that blacks are just human beings like others, with sensitivity and creativity. Van Vechten is also the author of Nigger Heaven. As one critic says:

Van Vechten's Nigger Heaven, published in 1926, is generally credited with being a precipitating factor of one aspect of the Harlem Renaissance. In this highly successful work, Van Vechten played up the sensual, animalistic, exotic side of the race. Harlem and the night club represented the focal point

⁸²"Who's Who of the Contributors" in The New Negro: An Interpretation, p. 415.

of his interest, and he purported to see Africa in the dance orchestras and songs of these clubs. Nigger Heaven caused an influx of curious and fun-seeking whites into Harlem's night-spots, of which the Cotton Club on Lenox Avenue was probably the most popular. "Colored" people were both flattered by and resented this heightened interest in their lives. Van Vechten, who was already a highly successful and respected critic before his work was penned, deliberately set out to utilize Nigger Heaven as a means of informing racial bigots that, like all other races, blacks too are human beings. Like many of the Harlem Renaissance writers, Van Vechten sought to propagandize and educate toward the end of better race relations. His attack was not directed against the masses, but against the upper classes who influence and direct the masses.⁸³

Van Vechten wanted to dramatize to the world the genius of black people, artists, entertainers and intellectuals, as proof of the humanity of the race. "Beginning with intellectuals of both races, Van Vechten sought to introduce the too-often segregated groups to each other, and the interracial salon approach which he utilized, along with his writing, was a hallmark of New York's social life in the twenties."⁸⁴

Walter Francis White (1893-1955), of mixed black and white descent and blond and blue-eyed, devoted his life to helping blacks. Although he was not primarily a writer, in his books, Fire in the Flint (1924), Flight (1926), Rope and Faggot (1929), Rising Wind (1945) and A Man Called White (1948), he dealt with the problems and hopes of nonwhite people. In his essay entitled "The Paradox of Color" White discusses the question of race prejudice in the United States. He asks questions such as:

⁸³George S. Schuyler, "Carl Van Vechten," Phylon XI (December 1950):362.

⁸⁴Earl E. Thorpe, The Mind of the Negro: An Intellectual History of Afro-Americans (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1961), p. 470.

What does race prejudice do to the inner man of him who is the victim of that prejudice? What is the feeling within the breasts of the Paul Robesons, the Roland Hayes, the Harry Burleighs, as they listen to the applause of those whose kind receive them as artists but refuse to accept them as men?⁸⁵

White is also a significant personality of the Harlem Renaissance because as one observer put it: "He was also a contributor to the Nation, Century, Forum, Freeman, Survey, Liberator, The Outlook, New Republic, The Crisis, Bookman and other literary journals."⁸⁶

White was born in Atlanta, Georgia and educated in that city's public schools and at Atlanta University, where he received a B. A. degree in 1916. White succeeded James Weldon Johnson as Executive Secretary of the NAACP in 1929, in which position he continued to serve until his death in 1955. As one critic puts it, "Walter White presided over the NAACP during its years of greatest growth and accomplishment. His life spanned the worst decades of lynching, race riots, disfranchisement, and Jim Crow to the decade of hope and desegregation after World War II, when the NAACP's victories in the courts started the Negro on the upward road to legal equality. White died in 1955, one year after the Supreme Court's decision in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka."⁸⁷ As a chief spokesman for the black people, he received many honors, including the Spingarn Medal from the NAACP in 1937. Hence, through his leadership of the NAACP, fighting for equal rights and an

⁸⁵Walter White, "The Paradox of Color" in The New Negro: An Interpretation, p. 362.

⁸⁶"Who's Who of the Contributors" in The New Negro: An Interpretation, pp. 418-419.

⁸⁷Ibid.

end to discrimination and segregation, and through his writings, Walter White also contributed greatly to the Harlem Renaissance as well as to later progress among blacks.

It is important to understand that the Harlem Renaissance was not just a literary movement but also, more broadly, an artistic one, meaning that it was a time which witnessed the development of black talent in dance, painting, music and the other arts, as well as in literature. Therefore, discussion of the Harlem Renaissance should include available black talent in music, painting and other arts. Other arts and artists are not treated here, however, because they are not related directly to this study, which involves only literature.

The Harlem Renaissance was an authentic flowering of black American arts and letters from 1920-1930. Its major achievements were in literature, though it also produced several important painters and composers of music. It was cut short by the Great Depression of the 1930's. Still, its significance is to be reckoned with, for it was a milestone in black American culture and the basis for some of the later black achievements.

The lost generation is another group of significant literary figures of the nineteen twenties. It was labelled and characterized by Gertrude Stein (1874-1946). The critic Malcolm Cowley speaks of the lost generation writers thus:

Since they were violently uprooted by the war and disillusioned with the ideals and traditions of their own upbringing, their prevailing reaction was a combination of philosophic despair and personal hedonism. But the attraction of expatriation and art were to compensate for abandoned values. Disenchantment with the materialism and provincialism of America crowned by prohibition was replaced by excitement over what they had seen in Europe. Paris, world capital of the arts, seemed antithetical to all things American, and a

highly favorable rate of exchange--whereby one could purchase 'la vie boheme' inexpensively--made things attractive.⁸⁸

As Cowley further says, "They were not a lost generation in the sense of being unfortunate or thwarted, like the young writers of the 1890's."⁸⁹ They were successful as writers. For example, "At the age of twenty-four Fitzgerald was earning eighteen thousand dollars a year with his stories and novels. Hemingway, Wilder, Dos Passos and Louis Bromfield were internationally known novelists before they were thirty."⁹⁰ Why was it, then, a lost generation? Cowley answers this question by saying:

Yet in spite of their opportunities and their achievements, the generation deserved for a long time the adjective that Gertrude Stein had applied to it. The reasons aren't hard to find. It was lost, first of all, because it was uprooted, schooled away and almost wrenched away from its attachment to any region or tradition. It was lost because its training had prepared it for another world than existed after the war (and because the war prepared it only for travel and excitement). It was lost because it tried to live in exile. It was lost because it accepted no older guides to conduct and because it had formed a false picture of society and the writer's place in it. The generation belonged to a period of transition from values already fixed to values that had to be created.⁹¹

One of the recurring themes of the lost generation writers was nostalgia. As Cowley asserts:

It was not by accident that their early books were almost all nostalgic, full of the wish to recapture some remembered thing. In Paris or Pamplona, writing, drinking, watching bullfights or making love, they continued to desire a Kentucky hill cabin, a farm house in Iowa or Wisconsin, the Michigan woods, the blue Juniata, a country they had "lost, ah, lost,"

⁸⁸Malcolm Cowley, Exile's Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920's (New York: The Viking Press, 1951), pp. 3-4.

⁸⁹Ibid., pp. 8-9.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 9.

⁹¹Ibid.

as Thomas Wolfe kept saying; a home to which they couldn't go back.⁹²

"The pioneer American emigrés to Paris were Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound, both of whom had left the United States early in the century."⁹³ Their apartments and Sylvia Beach's bookstore, "Shakespeare and Company," were magnets for young Americans with literary ambitions who were exhilarated by the conviction that the arts were being born anew. Leading lights, in addition to French artists in residence, were Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Ernest Hemingway, one of the greatest authors of the lost generation, in The Sun Also Rises (1926) describes Americans who roam France and Spain in search of fun and of a faith to believe in. The novel describes a lost generation which sought affluence, status, leisure and self-indulgence. It at once established Hemingway as one of the most influential writers of the 1900's. Many young writers modeled their writing on his simple, blunt style. Besides Hemingway, one of the most important members of the lost generation was F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940). His The Great Gatsby (1925) describes vividly the lost generation. It shows their moral collapse, their hypocrisy, their gossip and their Long Island urban life. It tells of an idealist who is gradually destroyed by the influence of wealth and the pleasure-seeking people around him. Thus, the 1920's saw the richest flowering of American letters since the mid-nineteenth century-- much of it written by people who had come to be known as "lost."

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Frederick J. Hoffman, The Twenties: American Writing in the Postwar Decade (New York: The Free Press, 1965), p. 25.

"Regionalism is another literary movement significant to the early part of the twentieth-century American novel. Regionalism in literature is a representation of a particular locale. In regional literature the locale is conceived of as a subject of interest in itself, and much attention is devoted to its description. It may, in fact, become so important as to play a role in the story and influence the lives of the characters."⁹⁴ Regional literature is generally realistic and likely to concern itself with life in rural areas or small towns, rather than in urban centers. Some of the finest regional writing has come from the south.

William Faulkner (1897-1962) is perhaps the greatest southern regional novelist. He set most of his novels and stories in the fictional Mississippi county of Yoknapatawapha, based on the actual Lafayette County. However, Faulkner is not purely a regional writer, for he achieved universal and far-reaching themes. As one critic points out:

For, like Shakespeare, Faulkner embraces the high and the low, the aristocratic and the plebeian, the courtly and the uncouth, the educated and the illiterate, the literary and the vernacular, the traditional and the modern.⁹⁵

Besides Faulkner, there are other southern regional authors, for example Ellen Glasgow (1874-1945). She will always be associated both with rural Virginia and with the capital city of Richmond and the Tidewater country. "Ellen Glasgow has been sympathetic with, though

⁹⁴George Core, ed., Regionalism and Beyond: Essays of Randall Stewart (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968), pp. 230-231.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 233.

also critical of, the traditions of Virginia."⁹⁶ She is an American author who wrote witty, compassionate novels about upper-class life in the south, a life she knew well. Her novels reveal both her conservative social conventions and the often unconventional ideas of that way of living. Her books deal largely with the life of her own class, but her judgements of that life are clear and unrestricted by class conventions. "Like most good novelists of manners, she had a deep understanding of human nature--too penetrating an insight to have much faith in social reform, although she sympathized with the victims of social injustice. She also had a clear eye for hypocrisy wherever it occurred."⁹⁷ Glasgow's finest novels include Barren Ground (1925), The Romantic Comedians (1926), They Stooped to Folly (1929) and Vein of Iron (1935). In This Our Life (1941) won a Pulitzer Prize.

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings (1896-1953), another southern novelist, wrote books describing life in the Florida backwoods. She worked as a journalist, but gave it up in 1928 to settle on a farm at Cross Creek, Florida. Her comfortless life there gave her the background for her novels. She became famous for sympathetic stories of children and animals. One of these stories, The Yearling, won a Pulitzer Prize in 1939. Rawlings' other books include South Moon Under (1933), Golden Apples (1935), When the Whippoorwill Sings (1940) and Cross Creek (1942). "In her books, Rawlings wrote so appealingly of the world of nature, of hunting and fishing, of the backwoods life and the cracker

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 175.

⁹⁷Ibid.

people of the Florida frontier, that readers tend to associate her with the subject-matter and see her only as an outdoorswoman."⁹⁸

Erskine Caldwell (1903-1987) is another significant American author. Over sixty-four million copies of his more than forty books have been published worldwide.⁹⁹ He first became famous with Tobacco Road (1932), which features his best-known character, Jeeter Lester. Tobacco Road was adapted into a play that ran more than seven years on Broadway during the 1930's. Caldwell's next novel, God's Little Acre (1933), increased his fame. His other novels include Georgia Boy (1943) and The Sure Hand of God (1947). Caldwell's Complete Stories appeared in 1953. In his memoir, Deep South: Memory and Observation (1966), Caldwell captures the experiences of both black and white people as they were before and when he wrote the book.

He traveled widely, listened with compassion and was rewarded with candor, as he talked with people of all kinds and of many persuasions, including the minister of a poverty-stricken sharecropping community; with a rich Baptist from Atlanta; with an administrator of Bob Jones University; with blacks and with whites.¹⁰⁰

Robert Penn Warren (1905-) is another significant southern author. As Charles H. Bohner says:

Robert Penn Warren is one of the most versatile as well as significant contemporary authors. During his more than forty years on the American literary scene, he has made important contributions to fiction, poetry, drama, biography and

⁹⁸Gordon E. Bigelow and Laura V. Monti, eds., Selected Letters of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings (Gainesville, Florida: University Presses of Florida, 1982), p. 1.

⁹⁹"Introduction" to Deep South: Memory and Observation by Erskine Caldwell (New York: Weybright and Talley, Inc., 1966), p. 1.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

literary criticism. Warren is, moreover, one of the rare men of letters who enjoy both popular success and critical esteem. Warren is the only writer to have been awarded a Pulitzer Prize for both fiction and poetry; in 1947 for All the King's Men, and in 1958 for Promises: Poems 1954-1956.¹⁰¹

All the King's Men is a novel which describes the rise and fall of a ruthless southern politician, specifically in Louisiana; the author has in mind Governor Huey Long. Warren also won the 1979 Poetry Prize for his collection Now and Then: Poems 1976-1978, which was published in 1978. In addition to All the King's Men, Warren's major novels include World Enough and Time (1950), The Cave (1959) and Meet Me in the Green Glen (1971).

These books reflect the author's southern heritage. They also emphasize the interaction of past and present and what Warren believes is each person's struggle to determine his or her identity. Besides being a novelist, Warren is also a poet and a recognized literary critic. Warren's poetry explores the themes of time, the individual, and the nature of evil. His long poem Brother to Dragons (1953) is typical of his verse. He always wanted it to be thought of as a novel in verse. Warren co-edited, with the critic Cleanth Brooks, two influential textbooks: Understanding Poetry (1938) and Understanding Fiction (1943).¹⁰²

Most of the other regional writers followed the tradition begun by William Faulkner. For example, Carson McCullers (1917-1967) wrote sad, haunting tales of grotesque characters in such works as The Ballad of the Sad Cafe (1951), Clock Without Hands (1961), and The Member of the Wedding (1951), equally famous as a novel and a play. Eudora Welty (1909-), a life-long resident of Mississippi, explored small-town southern life in several novels, including Delta Wedding (1946) and The

¹⁰¹Charles H. Bohner, Robert Penn Warren (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964), p. 1.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 13.

Optimist's Daughter (1972). Truman Capote (1924-1984) began his career with a distinctive novel in a southern setting, Other Voices, Other Rooms (1948). Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964) described the religious feelings of southern rural people in Wise Blood (1952) and The Violent Bear It Away (1960). Finally, Harper Lee (1926-) wrote To Kill a Mockingbird (1960), a vivid novel of racism in a small Alabama town.

Besides the above authors, several writers of the post-war period drew on their regional backgrounds in writing fiction and are termed post-war regionalists. These include Wright Morris (1910-) who used his memories of Nebraska in such novels as The Field of Vision (1956) and Ceremony in Lone Tree (1960). John Cheever (1912-1982) located most of his novels and stories in his native New England, notably the novels The Wapshot Chronicle (1957) and The Wapshot Scandal (1964). On the other hand, John Updike (1932-) recalled his Pennsylvania background in three related novels: Rabbit, Run (1960), Rabbit, Redux (1971) and Rabbit Grows Rich (1982), taking his hero into middle age. J. D. Salinger (1919-) used New York City as the background of his writings, including his extremely popular novel, The Catcher in the Rye (1951). This novel dealt sensitively with the problems of a teen-ager growing up in New York City. It forms part of the materials for this paper. Salinger is a Jewish-American novelist and an important producer of short stories.

United States literature also witnessed the springing up of other Jewish novelists, with several of the post-war period treating Jewish life in the United States. They depicted the conflict between traditional Jewish life and modern, non-Jewish American society. Saul Bellow (1915-), perhaps the most important post-war Jewish author,

wrote such philosophical novels as The Dangling Man (1944), The Victim (1947), The Adventures of Augie March (1953), Seize the Day (1956), Henderson the Rain King (1959), set primarily in Africa, Herzog (1964) and Mr. Sammler's Planet (1970). "All are much praised, for they are essentially moving. Bellow twice received National Book Awards for fiction, for Herzog and for The Adventures of Augie March."¹⁰³ Bernard Malamud (1914-), another Jewish author, hauntingly described the hard life of poor New York City Jews in his novel The Assistant (1957). Malamud also wrote A New Life, whose Seymour Levin is a Jewish college professor. Finally, Phillip Roth (1933-) caught the flavor of middle-class Jewish life in his novel entitled Portnoy's Complaint (1969).

"Roth's first book, Goodbye Columbus (1960), a short novel and five short stories, won the National Book Award. A sharply observed satire on Jewish life, it was particularly critical of the materialism of the nouveau riche."¹⁰⁴ It was followed by an academic novel, Letting Go (1962), and by When She Was Good (1967), about a midwestern housewife, failed by her father and husband, who becomes a self-appointed reformer (and destroyer) of men. "Portnoy's Complaint, an immediately popular book with the quality of a surrealist cartoon, is a satire about a young Jew reduced to ineffectiveness and inner conflict by his overly protective mother."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³"Saul Bellow" in American Literature: The Makers and the Making, Vol. II., pp. 2880-83.

¹⁰⁴"Phillip Roth" in American Literature: Realism to the Present, pp. 1797-1798.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

Roth's later novels include Our Gang (1971), a dark parody of the deviousness of an American president, "Trick E. Dixon," The Breast (1972), a grotesquely comic account of a man's transformation into a huge mammary gland, and The Great American Novel (1973). My Life as a Man (1974) and The Professor of Desire (1978) both show a man torn between sexual desire and renunciation. The Ghost Writer was published in 1979.

There were also the Beat Movement novelists. The Beat Movement was the name given to a group of writers of the 1950's, most of whom lived in New York City or San Francisco. The beats or beatniks, as they were called, condemned middle-class American life as morally bankrupt. They praised individualism as the highest human goal. The beat movement produced a few important works of fiction, especially On the Road (1957), an autobiographical novel by Jack Kerouac (1922-1969). During the 1960's the Beat Movement authors continued to rebel against American cultural and social values.

Various other American novelists emerged in the period shortly before and during World War II and extending to the present. Most of these were the war novelists who concerned themselves with the Second World War itself. For example, Irwin Shaw (1913-1984), a Jewish-American, in a novel entitled The Young Lions (1948), dealt with the war itself, specifically with three soldiers, two Americans and a German. Norman Mailer (1923-), also Jewish, wrote The Naked and the Dead (1948), a realistic account of American soldiers fighting in the Pacific. Herman Wouk (1915-) a third Jewish-American author, wrote The Caine Mutiny (1951), a suspenseful story of conflicts among officers on a United States Navy ship. James Jones (1921-1977), in a novel

entitled From Here to Eternity (1951), described United States army life in Hawaii just before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

T. Sigismund Stribling (1881-1965), another skilled writer, is known mainly for realistic novels. He began his career as a novelist with Birthright (1922), a story concerned with racial prejudice. Stribling's best known work is the trilogy The Forge (1931), The Store (1932) and The Unfinished Cathedral (1934), a grimly realistic study of a small town in Alabama during and after the Civil War. His novel Teefallow (1926), dramatized as Rope (1928), is set in a Tennessee mountain town. Stribling's travels in Venezuela provided background for adventure stories such as Fombombo (1923). The Sound Wagon (1935) and These Born of Flesh (1938) are social satires.

Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941) was an American short-story writer and novelist. In 1912 he deserted his family and his successful job as manager of a paint factory in Elyria, Ohio to begin a new life as a writer. "Many critics consider him a symbol of the rejection of materialistic middle-class values for the values of art."¹⁰⁶

From Ohio Anderson went to Chicago. There he published his first novel, Windy McPherson's Son (1916), which describes a man's break with conventional life and values. Anderson also wrote several other novels that expressed the frustration of individuals living within conventional industrial or social systems. "These books include Marching Men (1917), Poor White (1920, and Many Marriages (1923). In Dark Laughter (1925) Anderson contrasted an uncomplicated, happy way of life--which he

¹⁰⁶Malcolm Cowley, "Introduction" to Winesburg, Ohio by Sherwood Anderson (New York: The Viking Press, 1919), p. 5.

thought was symbolized by American blacks of his day--with a sterile, materialistic life--symbolized by American whites."¹⁰⁷

Anderson was most successful and influential as a short story writer. His first collection of stories, Winesburg, Ohio (1919), became his most important work. These tales made a significant break with the traditional American short story, which emphasized plot and action. In Winesburg, Ohio Anderson dealt primarily with the narrowness he saw in midwestern small-town life, especially the frustrations of the young and the lonely. He unified his stories with a growing intensity of emotional crisis, rather than through a developing plot action. "He was essentially a story teller, as he kept insisting, but his art was of a special type, belonging to an oral rather than a written tradition."¹⁰⁸

As one critic says:

In portraying characters in Winesburg, Ohio, Anderson became one of the earliest American writers to use psychological insights, particularly the concepts of Sigmund Freud. Anderson's characters are lonely and wistfully sad because they tend to make themselves into what the author called grotesques. Anderson believed there were once hundreds of truths, all of them beautiful. But people tended to adopt only one truth and call it theirs. The moment one of the people took one of the truths to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live his life by it, he became a grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood.¹⁰⁹

The Triumph of the Egg (1921) is also an important collection of Anderson stories. His ideas about fiction and life are collected in A Story Teller's Story (1924), Sherwood Anderson's Notebook (1926) and

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., pp. 13-14.

Sherwood Anderson's Memoirs (published in 1942, after his death; expanded edition published in 1969).

James Thomas Farrell (1904-1979) is best known for his novels about lower middle-class life in a decaying neighborhood in a large city. Farrell followed the theory of naturalism in his early works, believing that people are influenced overwhelmingly by their environment. His best known work is the Studs Lonigan Trilogy--Young Lonigan (1934), The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan (1934) and Judgment Day (1935).

These novels explore the impact of urban industrial life on a boy growing up in a poor Chicago neighborhood. Following the Lonigan series, he wrote five novels featuring Danny O'Neill, a stronger and more sensitive hero than Lonigan. The O'Neill stories show Farrell's newly found faith in the ability of people to deal with their circumstances.¹¹⁰

Farrell is an Irish-American and was reared a Roman Catholic. Both these facts are vital in comprehending the power of his work.

Richard Wright (1908-1968) is a significant black American author. Wright's first published fiction was Uncle Tom's Children (1938), a collection of four long stories. Wright gained immediate fame with his dramatic first novel Native Son (1940). The novel tells the story of Bigger Thomas, a young black of the Chicago slums. Wright describes Bigger's attempts to live within the discouraging pattern of black-white relationships in the city.

Bigger returns from reform school to Chicago to live, on relief, in a slum room with two younger children and his sick mother. Eventu-

¹¹⁰"James Thomas Farrell" in American Literature: The Makers and the Making, pp. 2424-2235.

ally Bigger is assigned to a relief job as chauffeur for white Mr. Dalton, whose fortune comes from slum real estate and who is also a princely benefactor of black people. His wife is symbolically blind and his college-girl daughter, Mary, is in love with a young Communist named Jan:

As Native Son progresses, Mary and Jan, out of their sentimental, as well as condescending, insensitive, and offensive 'good will,' force Bigger to eat with them in a restaurant while they give him information regarding their Communist politics. Later, while Bigger drives, Jan and Mary, now drunk, make love in the back seat of the car. Jan is dropped off at his lodgings, and when the car reaches the Dalton home Mary is so drunk that Bigger has to carry her, literally, up to her room. Just as he lays her on the bed and turns to go he finds Mary's blind mother in the doorway, and when Mary, though now passed out, begins to stir, Bigger, in panic, puts a pillow on her face to keep her quiet. Before Mrs. Dalton withdraws the girl is smothered to death, and Bigger, by accident, like the various blacks in Wright's Uncle Tom's Children, has been trapped in the great machine of society.

Ironically, by this accident, Bigger, for the first time in his life, is released into action. He puts the girl's body in the furnace, writes a ransom note to Mr. Dalton, and solicits help from his black girlfriend, Bessie Mears, to whom, however, he does not tell the whole story. When the crime is discovered and the pursuit is on for Bigger, he kills Bessie, who he thought might have otherwise betrayed him. Nevertheless, he is caught, and at his trial his lawyer, a Communist, defends him only in terms of Marxist theory, totally without recognition of his personal identity. Jan, however, does begin to realize, as well as he can, the human reality of Bigger.¹¹¹

Bigger too has been struggling toward that reality. At the end of the novel, during the farewell between Bigger and Boris Max, the lawyer, Bigger says:

¹¹¹"Richard Wright's Native Son," in American Literature: The Makers and the Making, 2 Vols., p. 2729.

But when I think of why all the killing was, I begin to feel what I wanted, what I am...'

Bigger saw Max back away from him with compressed lips. But he felt he had to make Max understand how he saw things now. 'I didn't want to kill.' Bigger shouted. 'But what I killed for, I am!'¹¹²

As Max goes down the corridor for the last time, Bigger stands grasping the steel bars. "Then he smiled a faint, wry, bitter smile."¹¹³ As three prominent critics comment, Native Son

...truly set the discussion of race in a new and shocking context; and it had power. Part of the power was of the sort found in Uncle Tom's Children, power derived from reportorial and analytic accuracy, and, as in the earlier work, from the dramatic irony of the process of entrapment.¹¹⁴

Wright's other novels include The Outsider (1953) and The Long Dream (1958). He wrote his autobiography, Black Boy in 1945. Wright continued his story in American Hunger (published in 1977, after his death). He also wrote about his experiences and ideas in Black Power (1954) and White Man, Listen! (1957), and in The God That Failed (1949), a collection of essays by him and by former Communists.

Following this survey of twentieth-century American fiction during the period 1900-1959, attention is given to some of the more prominent American novelists who emerged during the 1960's and on to the present. These include some black novelists. From the 1960's black novelists have become a vigorous element in American literature. For

¹¹²Richard Wright, Native Son (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1940), pp. 391-392.

¹¹³Ibid., p. 392.

¹¹⁴"Richard Wright's Native Son," in American Literature: the Makers and the Making, Volume II, pp. 2729-2730.

instance, Imamu Amiri Baraka (Le Roi Jones) (1934-), wrote The System of Dante's Hell (1963), a partially autobiographical novel. Toni Morrison has written a number of novels, including The Bluest Eye (1970) and Song of Solomon (1977), in which she depicts the search for black identity and other black values. Alice Walker (1944-) wrote The Color Purple (1982), which is about a poor southern black woman's fight for independence. It won her both the 1983 American Book Award for fiction and the 1983 Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

Representative non-fiction novel writers also emerged in the 1960's. The author of a non-fiction novel uses fictional techniques and a documentary style to tell about actual events and people. Truman Capote (1924-1984), the first to use the term "parajournalism," wrote perhaps the best-known example, In Cold Blood (1966), a book carefully based on the 1954 murder of a Kansas family.¹¹⁵ William Styron (1925-) wrote The Confessions of Nat Turner (1967), a fictional description of a slave rebellion that had taken place in Virginia in 1831. "In The Armies of the Night (1968) Norman Mailer dealt with a 1967 protest march on the Pentagon opposing the nation's involvement in the Vietnam war."¹¹⁶ John Hersey (1914-) described the killing of several blacks during a 1967 riot in Detroit in The Algiers Motel Incident (1968).

During the era after 1959, several female authors have been widely praised. During the 1960's and the 1970's a number of women's

¹¹⁵"Truman Capote" in American Literature: The Makers and the Making, Vol. II., p. 2883.

¹¹⁶Ibid.

groups protested what they regarded as discrimination against women in the United States. Their activities became known as the Women's Liberation Movement, a movement which inspired both fiction and non-fiction dealing with social and legal issues from a woman's point of view. Mary McCarthy (1912-) one of them, described the careers and personal lives of seven women in her novel The Group (1963). One of the most widely praised female writers who appeared in the 1960's was Joyce Carol Oates (1938-), who in her novel Them (1969) explored the violent lives of a woman and her daughter. Women fictionists and the demand of women for social changes are obviously vital, and hence have been included.

Black humor novelists also became prominent during the 1960's. "These authors developed a new approach to American fiction by combining comedy with serious subject matter and by inserting moments of hilarity into novels and stories that dealt basically with depressing, painful and violent subjects."¹¹⁷ Vladimir Nabakov (1899-1977) helped shape the black humor style. In such novels as Pale Fire (1962) Nabakov created a mixture of comedy, fantasy and satire. Lolita (1955), with its note of tragedy and its fascinating, poetic linguistic complexity, may be the finest of his novels. Perhaps the most widely read example of black humor was Catch 22 (1961), a novel by Joseph Heller (1923-) which concerns United States pilots during World War II, in which the author employs comedy to show the absurdities he had seen in warfare and large military organizations. The most popular writer of black humor is

¹¹⁷Max F. Schulz, Black Humor Fiction of the Sixties (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1973), pp. ix-x.

probably Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (1922-), who has portrayed what he regards as the madness in society through novels that are both funny and tragic, such as Cat's Cradle (1963) and Slaughterhouse Five (1969). As Peter J. Reed puts it:

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., is a writer of driving energy, rich comic invention, and sheer exuberance. He is deeply humane and a very human writer whose six novels have gained the admiration of countless younger (and older) readers in recent years.¹¹⁸

This chapter has given an overview of the finest twentieth-century American fiction. It discusses five developments that influenced American literature from 1900 to 1941, when the United States entered World War II. The first was the Industrial Revolution, which had reached its height in the United States in the 1800's. Writers of the 1900's began to look realistically at the pressing social problems it brought. The second development is the First World War, which affected Americans and other peoples of the world in various ways. It also influenced some of the great American writers who depicted characters who were damaged, injured or affected psychologically by the war. The third is the Great Depression, a worldwide business slump which brought about high unemployment and low business activity. The Depression also influenced some of the writers of that time. They depicted characters who suffered fear, hatred, cruelty and other vices exacerbated by the Great Depression. The fourth is the Second World War, which came just after the Great Depression. This war led some writers to produce works reflecting some of the consequences of the war

¹¹⁸Peter J. Reed, Writers for the 70's: Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (New York: Thomas Y. Cromwell Company, 1972), p. 1.

for American soldiers and the American people. The fifth is the philosophical and psychological ideas which influenced American novelists of the twentieth century. These ideas caused many American authors to become critical of American life. Viewed from this perspective, American fiction of the twentieth century is a record of unique value, for in it the reader can live through the fortunes of American idealism as it has had to meet the shock of lived experience.

In the next chapter the rationale for the literary selections made for this study will be explained. Expanding that rationale will be a discussion of the fundamental criteria which led to the choice of the period 1900-1959 as the chronological span for this study of the American novel. The chapter will also provide a rationale for the selection of the novels.

CHAPTER THREE
RATIONALE FOR THE SELECTION OF NOVELS
TO BE STUDIED IN THE PROPOSED COURSE

Selection of the eight novels to be studied in the proposed course was based on the artistic and intellectual importance of the novels and their reflection of life and manners of the American people at certain time-periods which fall within the sixty years covered in the course. During this era, as seen in Chapter one, various events took place in the United States and in the world which affected American literature. Some of the novels were selected because of their depiction of life in the United States as impacted upon by one or more of these events. They depict American life as affected by industrialization, urbanization, the Depression or one of the two great wars.

Sister Carrie was chosen mainly because its strengths lie in its showing the effects on American life of industrialization and consequent urbanization. Dreiser, with innate understanding of the strong American accent upon wealth, shows in Sister Carrie the influence of environment in shaping human life and actions. Carrie Meeber, the heroine, is a poor girl who because of her poverty becomes the mistress of a young salesman. Eventually she is duped into an illegitimate marriage with a saloon-keeper, Hurstwood, whom she abandons, and later wins success on the stage. Carrie is a "work seeker, an outcast without employment, one whom the average employer could tell at a glance was poor and in need of

a situation."¹ She realizes in a dim way how much the city holds: "wealth, fashion, ease--every adornment for women, and she longs for dress and beauty with a whole heart."² Leaving small-town Wisconsin and obtaining a job in a Chicago factory, she becomes ill under the strenuous working conditions. The factory is an unpleasant place to work because its entire atmosphere is sordid and it smells of stale odors. Working under such conditions for four dollars and fifty cents per week, and having to disburse three dollars and fifty cents for board and room, Carrie feels that she should be better served by life. Consequently, her heart revolts. "As for Carrie, her understanding of the moral significance of money was the popular understanding, Money; something everybody else has and I must get it."³ Soon she chooses the easy path to security. She has an affair first with Drouet and later with Hurstwood because each supports her financially. When she loses her job it appears that she will have to go back to Wisconsin, and the Hansons, her sister and her brother-in-law, encourage her to do so. If she cannot bring in money, they do not want her. Here Dreiser shows urban society as it was affected by the Industrial Revolution: to survive one needs a job and money for paying rent, buying food and using transportation. Eventually Carrie departs for New York with George Hurstwood, a prosperous married man. In New York, when Hurstwood's

¹Theodore Dreiser, Sister Carrie (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1900), p. 26.

²Ibid., p. 27.

³Ibid., p. 48.

meager resources dwindle, he finds it impossible to obtain employment suitable to a man of his former means and position. Later, when bills pile up because of their lack of money, they move to another apartment to escape their creditors. Here again Dreiser shows the indispensability of a job, and hence of money, to pay bills in order to survive in the city.

Most of the other selected novels are set in big cities which were products of the Industrial Revolution, namely either Chicago or New York, or both. For example, The Great Gatsby is set in New York City and Long Island. Lively, yet deeply moral, the novel is centered around a wealthy bootlegger named Jay Gatsby and is a penetrating study of the moral emptiness of wealthy American society during the 1920's.

The Catcher in the Rye encompasses three days spent primarily in New York City by the protagonist, Holden Caulfield. Also, the narrator of the story, Holden Caulfield is a sixteen-year-old boy who has just flunked out of his third preparatory school. He is in search of self-understanding and a meaning for his life. Unwilling to remain at school until the end of the term, Holden runs away to New York City. He does not contact his parents, who live there, but instead drifts around the city for two days. His misadventures with his sister, a girlfriend, a prostitute and others are comic on the surface, but agonizing for Holden. In the end he learns to face both the ugliness of life and certain major weaknesses in himself. Through his experience in New York readers see the ways of the big city, a city that was in large part a creation of the Industrial Revolution.

Similarly, Go Tell It On The Mountain is set in New York City, specifically in Harlem, and some of its events take place in Chicago.

The North, particularly New York, was considered by most Americans to be wealthy, civilized and hence enriched with more opportunities than the South. The characters Elizabeth and her lover Richard go to New York from the South to begin their married life there. Elizabeth's aim in going to "New York was to take advantage of the greater opportunities the North offered colored people; to study in a Northern school and to find a better job than any she was likely to be offered in the South."⁴ But do Richard and Elizabeth obtain what they seek in New York? No, they do not. In fact, they come to realize that "there was not, after all, a great difference between the world of the North and that of the South which she had fled; there was only this difference, the North promised more."⁵ When, in the big city, Richard is jailed for robbing a white man's store, he is acquitted by Elizabeth's efforts, but ends by committing suicide. Another character, Royal, goes to Chicago and also ends up badly, for he is killed. The big city is thus shown to have disastrous effects on some people.

In addition to their urban setting, some novels treat the theme of North versus South in the United States. These include Invisible Man, in which the locale is a small city and a "Negro" college in the South, as well as New York City. In the South the nameless protagonist is expelled from college; he leaves his idyllic campus, the comparatively logical South, and the relatively simple life of an adolescent

⁴James Baldwin, Go Tell It On The Mountain (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1953), pp. 161-162.

⁵Ibid., p. 163.

for the chaotic adult world of New York. In New York the hero assumes a series of roles: a young man seeking employment, a semi-skilled laborer, the Harlem leader of the Brotherhood, and a speaker on Women's Rights. The hero finds the order of events in New York senseless, and it becomes meaningful only when he, like Camus' "stranger," Meursault, accepts the senseless order as the absurd logic of his life.⁶

Before this acceptance he must gain an objective perspective and see the world both as ridiculous and as a mad dream filled with grotesque puppets and clowns. He becomes a clown in the madman's game when, in order to escape Ras the Destroyer, the black nationalist, he buys the wide hat and green glasses of the Zoot-Suiter. When he looks at the world through his green glasses he observes that it is absurd, chaotic and threatening, whereupon he rejects his role of Rinehart. Thus, in New York the hero loses his sense of certainty, falls from grace in the brotherhood and learns that the city is, after all, not able to offer the possibilities and opportunities he expected to get from it.⁷

The plot of Brown Girl, Brownstones is laid in Brooklyn, a heavily-populated area of New York. The novel tells the story of Barbadian immigrants striving to surmount poverty and racism there. The massive industrial machines and their noise in an urban setting, as well as urban life in general, are part of the story.

⁶Anonymous, review of Invisible Man, by Ralph Ellison, in Booklist 48(July 1952):378.

⁷Ibid.

Some novels were selected because they include such vital events as either the First World War (1914-1918), or the Great Depression, or both. Among the significant American novelists whose works fall in this category are F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway. The Great Gatsby belongs to that literature which endeavors to present the American scene honestly during those riotous years. The novel is about Jay Gatsby, who attempts to be accepted in New York's Long Island society. It gives a picture of the lost generation of the 1920's, that is, the generation which existed in the years from the First World War to the Great Depression. That generation had wealth, gave a lot of parties, had new automobiles and, in general, lived leisurely. The book also reveals the moral emptiness of that generation.

The First World War also served as the dominant background for Hemingway's fiction in the 1920's. For example, in The Sun Also Rises Hemingway occupied himself with the theme of the returning soldier who felt that there was much viciously wrong with the world to which he had returned. The novel depicted both the war itself and the post-war world of the American expatriate in Paris. The terror and monotony of life created by the war were what the post-war generation wanted to discover for itself. Hemingway's fiction of the 1920's was a continuous reminder of the need to adjust to the complexity and violence of that post-World War world.

Violent death is one of the principal themes of The Sun Also Rises. Hemingway vividly treats the tensions resulting from the war. He makes it apparent that the violence comes as an unsatisfactory adjustment to a situation that is the aftermath of the war. He skillfully uses this story to show the social disintegration of the

post-World War I period. The characters are all, in one way or another, victims of the war.

Thus, among other reasons, The Great Gatsby and The Sun Also Rises were chosen because of their treatment of the "lost generation" of the post-World War I period. Also, Go Tell It On The Mountain, although set in 1952, is concerned in part with the aftermath of the First World War. For example, Frank, Florence's husband, participates in the war and is eventually killed in France during World War I.

The Second World War is also one of the great world events included in some of the novels chosen for this study. One such novel is Invisible Man. As a matter of fact, Ellison himself indicates the elements of war as shaping the writing of certain episodes in this novel:

Undramatized, all this might sound a bit extreme, yet historically most of this nation's conflicts of arms have been--at least for Afro-Americans--wars within wars. Such was true of the Civil War, of the last of the Indian Wars, of the Spanish-American War, and of World Wars I and II. And in order for the Negro to fulfill his duty as a citizen it was often necessary that he fight for his self-affirmed right to fight.⁸

After the First World War the contribution of black soldiers to that conflict was neither recognized nor respected, nor were they given advantages in recognition of their patriotism. In Ellison's novel the ex-soldiers are patients receiving therapy in a certain hospital; they are not given any privileges, not even those of freedom, because they are black. As one character says: "'We're patients sent here as therapy,' a short, fat, very intelligent-looking man said. 'But,' he

⁸Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man (New York: Vintage Books, 1952), p. x.

smiled, 'they send along an attendant, a kind of censor, to see that the therapy fails.'"⁹ The world of those veterans is a chaotic one. The veterans Ellison is referring to are black survivors of World War I. They are especially resentful because of conditions in their native land as compared to the social practices and traditions which they have seen in Europe.

Set in Brooklyn during the Depression and World War II, Brown Girl, Brownstones also treats some aspects of the aftermath of the war. The story begins shortly before the war and continues for about ten years afterwards. Book Three is entitled "The War," and begins by mentioning Adolph Hitler, the evil German dictator from 1933 to 1945, who started the Second World War. He is mentioned recurringly in Brown Girl, Brownstones either in relation to his literal participation in the war or to symbolically reflect the tensions (or wars) within the characters of that novel. Silla is referred to by her daughter Selina repeatedly as "Hitler." Why? Because all of Silla's terrible deeds and her complainings, groanings and mistreatment of her husband, Deighton Boyce, lead to their separation. Deighton moves out of her house to live in a certain religiously-based restaurant, which he manages. As if that were not enough, Silla swears out a warrant for the deportation of Boyce for illegal entry into the United States because so far as she is concerned he does not recognize his own family. Consequently, Deighton is deported to Barbados. The end of the Second World War coincided with his death.

⁹Ibid., p. 80.

On the day the war ended, a cable arrived saying that Deighton Boyce had either jumped or fallen overboard and drowned at a point within sight of the Barbados coast and that a post-humous burial service had been read at sea.

While Silla read them the cable, the radio announced the war's end, and all down the sun-swept streets windows were raised and the news was shouted. Strangers embraced on Chauncey Street. And the dark soldiers whiling away their leaves in the bars on Fulton Street grabbed the whores and spun them in a wild dance out into the street and kissed their laughing mouths; one shouted, "C'mon, baby, this is one time I'll buy you a drink. The goddamn war's over." (pp. 185-186)

The significance of the coincidence here is that Marshall parallels the end of the Second World War with the end of Deighton's life.

The war frustrated the Barbadian immigrants and other Americans. At one point, Selina says: "Lordy, I hope they don't bomb Barbados."¹⁰ Although "for a long time Selina did not really believe in the war," (p.66) during that winter when the war seemed to reach and claim her she became frightened by it. Furthermore, the war has deterred the Barbadians' progress. For example, Silla is unable to buy curtains for her house, saying: "Woman, who can be buying anything new with all this war and foolishness going on?" (p. 69) She blames the politicians for causing the war. "It's these politicians. They's the ones always starting up all this lot of war. And what they care? It's the poor people got to suffer and mothers with their sons." (p.69) Indeed, the son of Florrie is due to join the army. "'Oh, Jesus-Christ-God, Silla,' Florrie shuddered. 'Don't speak, do. Livingston's due to go, y'know."

¹⁰Paule Marshall, Brown Girl, Brownstones (New York: The Feminist Press, 1959), p. 66. All subsequent quotations will be cited from this edition, unless otherwise noted.

He an' no good, but he's my only son.'" (p. 69) Marshall further writes: "The war swept through its round of death, and Selina, resigned to defeat, moved through her uneventful round of school." (p. 107) The church believers, says Marshall, believe that war is caused by the immorality of people in society: "Outside in the world there is immorality, and the things that come of immorality: wars and ambition, hate and carnal lust. The way people live out there is death." (p. 166) Although the immorality of the people might have contributed to the war, Marshall says that the majority of the people prefer peace to war. (p. 185-186) Their attitude is evidenced by the fact that when the war ended, many people, including the soldiers, were joyful and celebrated its end.

Nostalgia is an important theme, the presence of which in some of the novels led to their choice for this study. Invisible Man is one of them. Some characters in this novel look back nostalgically. For example, "the vet patient who is receiving therapy at an institution had been to France to have surgery performed, but he returned home to the United States because of nostalgia."¹¹ Another character, Homer Barbee, looks back to his past life with nostalgia.

'Ah, those days in which he tilled his mighty fields, those days in which he watched the crops take hold and grow, those youthful, summery, sun-bright days...' Barbee's voice sighed off in nostalgia. (p. 124)

¹¹Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man (New York: Vintage Books, 1952), p. 91. All subsequent quotations will be cited from this edition, unless otherwise noted.

Thus Barbee reminisces on his past with deeply sentimental feeling. Ellison appears to include nostalgia as a theme because he believes in the significance of history. In his introductory remarks to Invisible Man, he asserts, as he looks back at some of his past experiences:

Shortly before the spokesman for invisibility intruded, I had seen, in a nearby Vermont village, a poster announcing the performance of a "Tom Show," that forgotten term for black-face minstrel versions of Mrs. Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. I had thought such entertainment a thing of the past, but there in a quiet northern village, it was alive and kicking, with Eliza, frantically slipping and sliding on the ice, still trying--and that during World War II!--to escape the slaving hounds... Oh, I went to the hills/To hide my face/The hills cried out. No hiding place/There's no hiding place/up here! No, because what is commonly assumed to be past history is actually as much a part of the living present as William Faulkner insisted. Furtive, implacable and tricky, it inspires both the observer and the scene observed, artifacts, manners and atmosphere, and it speaks even when no one wills to listen. (p. xiii)

According to Ellison, because the old times are important and part of the living present, history is indispensable to the present and future life of mankind.

Nostalgia is also one of the significant themes of Brown Girl, Brownstones. To Silla the island not only represents poverty and oppression, but it also has a poetry and beauty that she both misses and despises. Silla's bitterness results from her childhood experiences of hard labor and educational deprivation. To Deighton the island is his heart's desire, and he longs to return to it. When an unexpected legacy gives him two acres of island land, he plans to return home and build a house. This shows him nostalgic.

Not only black writers employ the theme of nostalgia. Hemingway includes that theme through his treatment of Jake Barnes, an American Veteran of World War I now living and working in Paris as a newsman.

For Jake Barnes memories of World War I and its ill effects have become a torment and an encumbrance. He cannot now, in 1926, show courage on the battlefield, but must endure his own painful, repeated pressures in "peacetime." He illustrates a negative nostalgia, as he returns to painful but fascinating memories of his prewar life, his experiences in the First World War and his life in Paris before the novel opens.

Rationale for the selection of the novels included the fact that they introduce students to significant black and white writers, both male and female, as representatives of various important racial/ethnic groups within American society. On the basis of this criterion, four white, three black and one Jewish author were chosen. It is worth notice that J. D. Salinger, one of the novelists, like all "ethnic Jews," is racially a Caucasian. Paule Marshall, the only female novelist included in this study, is black and was raised in the United States, although her parents were Barbadian immigrants.

In the next section, the significance of each individual author will be discussed in the order of publication of the author's novel chosen for study in this paper.

Theodore Dreiser ranks as the foremost American writer in the Naturalism Movement, a somber and pessimistic form of realism. Dreiser's characters are victims of apparently meaningless incidents which result in pressures the characters can neither control nor understand. Dreiser based such novels as Sister Carrie and An American Tragedy on events from real life. He condemned not his villains, but the repressive, hypocritical society that produced them. His style lacks grace, but his best stories are powerful and sobering.

Dreiser was born in Sullivan, Indiana on August 27, 1871. His family was very poor, and he soon saw a profound difference between the promise and the reality of American life. This realization was a major source of his discontent and an important influence upon him. Three forces had direct influence upon Dreiser as a man, on his works, and on him as a writer, namely the conditions of his own personal life, the spirit of the times in which he lived and the literature which he had read.

Dreiser had various disappointments during his lifetime. One disappointment came about when the Doubleday Press made no attempt to promote his work, Sister Carrie, and although 1,000 copies of this book were printed, fewer than 500 were sold. This disappointment, the death of his parents, the difficulties his brothers and sisters were encountering, the unhappiness of his marriage, and a quarrel with his brother,¹² Paul, all combined to drive Dreiser to the verge of suicide.

Over the next few years Dreiser worked at a variety of literary jobs and by 1910 was earning \$10,000 a year as editor of three women's magazines. Throughout the remainder of his life, he continued to write short stories, plays, poems, travel books, novels and memoirs.

Many critics have turned, quite understandably, to Dreiser's life, for there we find the same paradox which characterizes the fiction: a genuine sympathy for man and yet a strong urge to become top dog in that animalistic struggle which is life. Raised in extreme poverty, harassed by the fanatic religion of his family, Dreiser, throughout his life, was both sympathetic and selfish. As a young man he washed dishes, shoveled coal, worked as a newspaper reporter, rejected college as being unrealistic, and yet, after writing Sister Carrie, his protest for a better understanding of the common man, he began working for pulp and slick magazines of a most unrealistic sort and made a good deal of money doing it. Late in his life, long after he had won his fight against narrowly

¹²W. A. Swanberg, Dreiser (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), p. 94.

moralistic censorship, he flirted pathetically with spiritualism and communism, revealing yet another side of his complex nature.¹³

Dreiser was a pioneer of naturalism in American writing. He sought to free the novel both from Victorian notions of decorum and from the "realistic" literary theory that the novelist's task is simply to reproduce "ordinary life."

Dreiser's naturalism derived from a mechanistic concept of life that sees man as the victim of instincts, social forces, economics and chance. His philosophy was strongly influenced by Herbert Spencer, who had popularized Darwin's theory of evolution and applied the biological laws of survival to life in the anonymous streets of the city. Dreiser was also influenced by Balzac, often thought to be the precursor of French naturalism.¹⁴

Because of Dreiser's naturalistic philosophy of life, he does not allow his characters to be punished.

... Dreiser's commitment to a theme and technique called naturalism is important. According to standard sources, naturalism is the belief that man is shaped by hereditary and environmental forces beyond his control. More specifically, naturalism is the belief that man's inner sense of willing toward a good or toward an evil is an illusion merely. Thus, for the naturalist, it makes no sense to blame the wicked, for they are merely doing what they have been made to do. Likewise, it makes no sense to praise the virtuous, for they too are merely doing what they have been made to do. The naturalistic novelist, then, cannot judge his characters, but must adopt a style which, at least in its tone, is that of the scientist, the unbiased reporter of what is.¹⁵

¹³Max Westbrook, "Introduction," in The Modern American Novel: Essays in Criticism (New York: Random House, Inc., 1966), p. 19.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

There is no critical consensus about Dreiser's stature as a novelist. At his best he wrote with great power; the attention to detail he learned as a reporter served him well when he tried to evoke the urban settings characteristic of his fiction. He was selected as one of the novelists to be studied because he is significant, nevertheless, as an American fictionist. As a novelist, he is considered the first artist of his day to portray with truth and power life in modern America. The America Dreiser portrays reveals the poverty, the evil and the social prejudices which he himself experienced as a boy, as well as certain elements of American life which as an adult he observed among other people. Dreiser is also important because his novels later became a model for the fiction of his younger contemporaries. The fictional works of such writers as Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson and F. Scott Fitzgerald embody a philosophy essentially Dreiserian. These writers, like Dreiser, sought to portray American life as they actually saw it and to express what they felt about modern American society. Hence, Dreiser is interesting as a major figure in American literature, both because he represents elements in American life which no other novelist preceding him had ever attempted and because his work as a writer and social critic has been emulated by some later American writers.

F. Scott Fitzgerald was the leading writer of America's Jazz Age, the Roaring Twenties, and one of its glittering heroes. The chief quality of Fitzgerald's talent was his ability to be both a leading participant in the high life he described and a detached observer of it. Many readers saw the serious side of Fitzgerald, and he was generally recognized as a gifted writer during his lifetime. Even later, readers also realized that Fitzgerald's books have a theme of

morality that goes beyond the "fun" the stories seem merely to record and celebrate.

The Great Gatsby, the Fitzgerald novel selected for the proposed course, was less popular than his early works, but the book was the first of his novels to assure him lasting importance. That novel centers on a wealthy bootlegger named Jay Gatsby and the moral emptiness of wealthy American society during the 1920's.

Critics generally agree that Fitzgerald's early success damaged his personal life and marred his literary production. That success led to his extravagant living and increasing need for a large income. It probably contributed to his alcoholism and the mental breakdown of his wife, Zelda. It also probably led to his own physical and spiritual collapse, which he described frankly in the long essay The Crack-Up (1936). Fitzgerald spent his last years as a scriptwriter in Hollywood. A few years after his death his books won him the critical recognition he had desired while alive.

The short life of F. Scott Fitzgerald was long enough for that brilliant young man to show what the United States meant in terms of the reckless twenties. Prohibition and speakeasies, new automobiles, victory abroad, popular fads, new wealth--he understood and wrote about all these realities.

Despite its limitations of style and its imperfections in character development, The Great Gatsby belongs to that literature which endeavors honestly to present the American scene during those riotous years from the First World War to the Depression.¹⁶

¹⁶Milton Hindus, F. Scott Fitzgerald: An Introduction and Interpretation (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968), p. 1.

If Fitzgerald's view of character was limited, it may be because his overall comprehension of society was so positive. His acute sensibility was devoted to an understanding of the results of human action, rather than to an understanding of the reasons for human actions. Thus, one of the major reasons why The Great Gatsby was chosen for study is that in it Fitzgerald vividly reveals some of the effects of the First World War on some Americans. Also, the novel shows the greatest consciousness of form in its construction; this is why today it is considered the best of Fitzgerald's work. Fitzgerald's method of narration illustrates the importance of form. One of the numerous consequences of using Nick Carraway as a first-person narrator is that the immediacy of the presentation is increased, making the whole novel more dramatic. Hence that novel was chosen because of its brilliant description of Jazz Age America and its equally skillful characterization, as well as its being primarily a novel of ideas. Finally, it was chosen to introduce Fitzgerald as one of the significant American novelists of the twentieth century.

Ernest Hemingway was one of the most famous and influential American writers of the century's first half. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954 and had won a Pulitzer Prize the previous year for his brief novel The Old Man and the Sea (1952). Hemingway developed a plain, forceful prose style characterized by simple sentences with few adjectives or adverbs. He wrote crisp, vivid dialogue and exact descriptions of places and things. His style has been imitated by many writers.

In his own life, Hemingway long pursued the active life. His books describe, and his fame rests in part on, these non-literary adventures. "Four times married and the father of three sons, he participated in or was a witness to most of the major and minor wars of his time. For a long time, he was well known as sportsman-hunter, prizefighter, fishing enthusiast and record-holder."¹⁷ Hemingway suffered physical and mental illness during the 1950's, and he committed suicide in 1961.

Hemingway created a type of male character, sometimes called the "Hemingway hero," who faces violence and destruction with courage. The trait of "grace under pressure," that is, unemotional behavior even in highly dangerous situations, is part of what became known as the "Hemingway code." Jake Barnes of The Sun Also Rises is one such "Hemingway hero" who will be studied in this course. Jake was wounded accidentally during World War I. He attempts to readjust in Paris by working for a newspaper there. At the same time he copes with memories of war and of a frustrated romance with an English volunteer nurse, Brett Ashley. Jake is the "Hemingway hero" because he is both tortured and admired, as evidenced through his competence as a journalist, his understanding for others and his capacity to endure "pressures" of a different, but equally harsh, kind than those of the battlefield and hospitals of the First World War.

¹⁷Harry Warfel, American Novelists of To-day (New York: American Book Company, 1951), pp. 200-202.

The Sun Also Rises was selected for study in this paper for several reasons. The first is the themes it presents regarding some English people and some Americans of the post-World War I era. The novel introduces English and American drifters who have the money and the time to go where they want--from the boulevards of Paris to the bullfights of Spain--bathing, eating and drinking the while. The novel conveys the tragedy of these people's lives, particularly through the futile love of Jake, who tells the story. Another important reason is the novel's powerful techniques, its eloquent use of dialogue, first-person narrative, terse, precise and aggressively fresh prose, as well as dramatic description such as the account of the bullfights and fiesta at Pamplona. Finally, it was selected to introduce its author as one of the greatest American writers of the twentieth-century American novel.

William Faulkner also ranks among the leading American authors of the period from 1920-1960. He gained fame for his novels about the mythical Yoknapatawpha County and its seat of Jefferson. Faulkner patterned the county after the area around his home town, Oxford, Mississippi. He explored the county's geography, history, economy, social and moral life. He also described the decay of its aristocratic families and their inability to adjust to modern life. He received the 1949 Nobel Prize for Literature and Pulitzer Prizes in 1955 for A Fable and in 1962 for The Reivers. Faulkner's Intruder in the Dust was chosen for study in this paper for a variety of reasons which center around its themes and its techniques. It is unlike any other work of Faulkner, primarily because it explores the relationship between black and white attitudes in the south. The meaning of Intruder in the Dust lies in the legal process of determining guilt and innocence. Regarding Lucas

Beauchamp, the community feels that he is guilty solely because he is a black man who has been found standing over the body of a murdered white man. Secondly, the novel speaks to the reader concerning the execution of law and justice. For example, the community threatens to lynch Lucas for murder without giving him a trial. Finally, Lucas is a champion of truth and dignity. He challenges the cultural patterns and the traditions of the south. With extreme skill, Faulkner has utilized the obscene brutality of a threatened lynching, a communal crime which is aborted, as a metaphor for the changed epoch which he sees as possible for the south. Intruder in the Dust is a powerful and fascinating story, richly creating place, character and race. It is a successful novel because Faulkner succeeds in making the reader believe in its central character, understand him and sympathize with him. Also, it was chosen simply to introduce its author as one of the most important of American novelists.

J. D. Salinger was chosen for this study because he is one of America's significant writers today. With the publication of The Catcher in the Rye Jerome David Salinger gained almost immediate acceptance as being among the most significant post-World War II American novelists. "Thereafter his work became assigned reading for a majority of high school and college English courses."¹⁸ The Catcher in the Rye and the short stories that preceded it clearly appeal directly to youth, which the young author so imaginatively recreates.

¹⁸Charlotte Alexander, J. D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye:" A Critical Commentary (New York: Monarch Press, 1965), p. 5.

It should not be thought that this novel on the various personal crises of a youthful protagonist is unique in American fiction, for Huckleberry Finn is certainly a prototype of Salinger's Holden Caulfield. Like Huck Finn, the deeply disturbed Holden Caulfield became a legendary figure, and his acute adolescent awareness became synonymous with the sensitivity of a great many Americans. As author, critic and product of an era of American socioeconomic and political conditions after the Second World War, J. D. Salinger is important and intensely illuminating:

Jerome David Salinger, man of mystery and conscientious alien from all things connected with the society that his youthful hero lamented over, has progressively withdrawn from the company of all but a select few of his fellow human beings,¹⁹ and upon this he appears to have imposed a vow of silence.

The Catcher in the Rye was selected to be studied mainly because it treats the theme of adolescence eloquently. The novel explores the conflicts within an adolescent as he tries to adjust to the perverted values of an adult. Thus, it makes a good choice because of its sensitive insight into the currently important topic of adolescence, as well as for its quality of writing. Also, that novel was chosen to introduce its author as one of the great American novelists during the twentieth century. Finally, because J. D. Salinger is a Jewish-American writer, his novel was chosen to demonstrate the fact that Jews are part of both the American population and the literary world.

James Arthur Baldwin, the author of Go Tell It On The Mountain, is one of the outstanding black American authors, noted for his books on

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 5-6.

racial conflict in the United States. Many critics have praised Baldwin for his ability to make his readers feel intensely his view of the damage that racial prejudice inflicts on both blacks and whites. Go Tell It On The Mountain was chosen to be studied in this paper for a number of reasons. That novel is quite impressive because of the economy of its form, as well as owing to its initial statement of Baldwin's vision of the brotherhood of man, represented in the deposition of the father-figure and the initiation of the son into the company of the saints. Also, it was chosen in order to introduce its author as one of the most significant twentieth-century American novelists.

Ralph Ellison is a black American novelist and essayist whose novel, Invisible Man, is one of contemporary fiction's most moving treatments of the black experience in modern American society. Ellison is also the author of Shadow and Act, a collection of essays. The esteem in which he is held is all the more remarkable when it is realized that Invisible Man, the main basis for his reputation, was published thirty-three years ago. Invisible Man was selected to be studied in this paper because it is a great novel in the American tradition. It is significant for its process of self-discovery, for its emphasis on individuality and for its technique of candid revelation. In addition, it is a powerful presentation of the black experience in the United States. Also, in studying that novel, the students will obviously be introduced to its author as significant both as a black and as an American novelist.

Paule Marshall was born in 1929 in Brooklyn, New York, just prior to the Depression. Her parents, both Barbadians, immigrated to the

United States, like so many other West Indians, shortly after the First World War. Her childhood was shaped by the tough, atonal, poetic quality of their speech and by their style of life. After the publication of a serious short story, "Reena," in a little magazine, Our World, Paule Marshall began writing her first novel, Brown Girl, Brownstones, returning to Barbados in 1956 to complete the first draft and again in 1958 to start the revisions. Marshall says: "I suppose I am a wanderer and an outsider, living by a very ancient code, the only one that seems certain amid uncertainty: 'To eat, drink and find pleasure in one's work.'"²⁰ Marshall is also the author of a novel, The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1969), and a book of short stories entitled, Soul Clap Hands and Sing (1961).

Paule Marshall's significance for this paper lies in a variety of reasons. One is that of all the novelists selected she is the only female author and also, with the exception of Dreiser, the only novelist whose protagonist is a female. Marshall's protagonist is both a female and a West Indian. As one magazine puts it:

Paule Marshall took upon herself the pioneering task of creating an image of the black woman in fiction, not simply as a product of America, but one whose story is equally tied and bound to the West Indies as it is to its source, Africa. The black woman in Paule Marshall's work is West Indian and, therefore, African by nature,²¹ a primary connection that has to be recognized and respected.

Another reason is that Marshall's style is artistic, original, creative and witty. As one reviewer of Brown Girl, Brownstones puts it:

²⁰Ibid.

²¹"Paule Marshall in Celebration," Essence 10(May 1971):62.

When Mrs. Marshall writes about those she truly loves, she cannot be resisted. She brings (to her characters) an instinctive understanding, a generosity, and a free humor that combines to form a style remarkable for its courage, its color, and its natural control.²²

The significance of this in this novel also lies in the fact that its contents are powerfully presented and they enable the readers to understand human experience such as that of the Barbadian immigrants in the United States. As another reviewer adds about the significance of that novel: "This is an unforgettable novel written with pride and anger, with rebellion and tears. Rich in content and in cadences of the king's and "Bajun" English, it is the work of a highly gifted writer."²³ And, finally, the Saturday Review says that the novel is "passionate, compelling...an impressive accomplishment."²⁴ Another reason for selecting Marshall as part of this study is her vivid treatment of a range of subjects including religion, the causes and effects of World War II, political exploitation of Barbadians, poverty, most Barbadians' allegiance to Great Britain, the crisis of adolescence, identity crisis, the race problem, the importance of tradition for the black American and the need for sharing to achieve meaningful relationships with others. For all those reasons, Paule Marshall was chosen to be studied in this paper.

²²Anonymous, review of Brown Girl, Brownstones, by Paule Marshall, in The New Yorker, 19 September 1959, p. 191.

²³Anonymous, review of Brown Girl, Brownstones, by Paule Marshall, in Herald Tribune Book Review, 16 August 1959, p. 5.

²⁴Anonymous, review of Brown Girl, Brownstones, by Paule Marshall, in Saturday Review, 29 August 1959, p. 14.

Some of the novels were selected because they are of obvious moral and ethical interest. Dreiser, in Sister Carrie, shows his attitude toward morality and American society from the naturalistic point of view. Dreiser feels that, given certain hereditary and environmental conditions, an individual will act according to the dictates of his needs and of his desires. He presents Carrie Meeber as an individual whose life is shaped by the environment. She is motivated by longings for security, wealth and pleasure. At the beginning of the novel, Dreiser says that Carrie might lose her innocence and virtue as a result of her experiences in the big city.

When a girl leaves her home at eighteen, she does one of two things. Either she falls into saving hands and becomes better, or she rapidly assumes the cosmopolitan standard of virtue and becomes worse. Of an intermediate balance, under the circumstances, there is no possibility. The city has its cunning wiles, no less than the infinitely smaller and more human tempter. There are large forces which allure with all the soulfulness of expression possible in the most cultured human. The gleam of a thousand lights is often in a wooing and fascinating eye. Half the undoing of the unsophisticated and natural mind is accomplished by forces wholly super-human.²⁵

Nonetheless, Carrie's sexual behavior is quite contrary to the then-acceptable morals of early twentieth-century society. Carrie Meeber is not punished by society like other Dreiser protagonists. Her degradation seems to be of no ethical significance, for she becomes a successful actress in spite of her defiance of moral codes. Maxwell Geismar, a literary historian and critic, has this to say of Carrie:

²⁵Theodore Dreiser, Sister Carrie, pp. 7-8.

An immoral woman who was never basically immoral; a heroine who created a storm of sexual controversy, but was not directly sexual; a fallen woman who rose in the world because she had not realized the extent of her fall.²⁶

Other critics suggest that Carrie was not evil or weak, but the product of her world, symbolizing both some of America's false values and its innocence. Still others suggest that Carrie's life was shaped by chance and need, the need being to attain the tangible benefits of life and to live a life of comfort. Drieser feels that, according to the law of survival, Carrie was right; he does not regard her as sinful.²⁷

On the other hand, F. Scott Fitzgerald in The Great Gatsby looks at morality in American society on a different plane. He portrays the moral emptiness of wealthy American society in the 1920's, including moral collapse, gossip and hypocrisy. Social manners, according to Fitzgerald, were inevitably affected by wealth. According to him, wealth seemed necessary; therefore, he does not disapprove of it. To be corrupt and rich was seemingly the motto by which this new generation of the 1920's lived. Gatsby, for example, the notorious bootlegger who within three years became wealthy enough to live fabulously on Long Island, extends an invitation to Nick Carraway to do the same. Nick refuses to accept Gatsby's offer. He has not been corrupted by seeking or spending money; he is very certain of his own values. In fact, he

²⁶Maxwell Geismar, Rebels and Ancestors: The American Novel, 1890-1915 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Riverside Press, 1953), p. 295.

²⁷Richard Lehan, Theodore Dreiser: His World and His Novels (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1946), pp. 76-77.

represents for Fitzgerald the few people who were not affected by the changing world of morals and manners which resulted from the economic boom following the war.

Hemingway's novel The Sun Also Rises reflects the events occurring after the First World War and the generation which was young then. It was comprised of people who had been damaged in some fundamental way by the war, that is, physically, morally, psychologically or economically. Because of the terror and tiresomeness of the war, most characters in The Sun Also Rises are involved only in leisure activities such as the violent spectacle of the bullfights, fishing, eating, bathing and drinking. Hemingway also depicts spiritual and sexual frustration in this novel. The characters experience pleasure, but they have no hope of salvation. They are presented in a sterile atmosphere of complete frustration. For instance, Jake Barnes, after the moral and physical consequences of a fight with Cohn over Brett, begins to lose control of himself and to feel that the whole experience is unreal. Brett also shows symptoms of breaking up. Her neurosis drives her from bar to bar, from man to man and from city to city. She does not derive any satisfaction from her various love affairs. Brett Ashley's promiscuity and the constant drinking of her friends bring on much quarreling and inevitable violence. The setting, the characters and the plot of The Sun Also Rises all provide a situation in which Hemingway has ample opportunity for commenting on the moral situation of the "lost generation," their leisure activities, their sexual frustration and immorality, and their violence, which comes as an unsatisfactory adjustment to the desperately unhappy situation that is the aftermath of World War I.

Questions of morality are also dealt with in William Faulkner's Intruder in the Dust. In this novel Faulkner has tried to make a choice between good and evil possible within the nightmare life of his characters. Lucas, the black man falsely accused of murdering a white man, is saved from being lynched by the sixteen-year-old white boy, Chick. At the core of the book is the moral issue that black people have a natural dignity which makes them the ideal object of racial hatred. Racial conflict is one of the salient problems in American society. Lucas' moral strength is evidenced in the fact that he is a champion of truth and dignity. He challenges the cultural patterns and the traditions of the south. When Chick offers Lucas some money, the latter refuses. Here Lucas' refusal to submit to a white person's expectation about him contributes to making him a figure of dignity and integrity. The incident also shows that Lucas is a proud, almost insolent, Negro.

The moral issue of the race problem in the United States is also a dominant theme in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man. The invisibility of black people to white people is treated. Invisible Man is an account of a nameless black protagonist's attempts to be successful in the world of white society and of his realization that he is in fact "invisible," that is, non-existent, to whites, since they refuse to see him as a human being. The search of this unnamed protagonist is for both individual identity and racial meaning in his passage from innocence to experience in a chaotic American society. He learns of many whites' manipulation of black aspirations, with their motto seeming to be, "Keep this colored boy running." Thus, by being able to vividly present the racial problem in America Ralph Ellison has become one of the significant writers of today.

Similarly, James Baldwin in Go Tell It On The Mountain approaches the moral question of racial conflict and racial hatred in American society and suggests that "love" and the "brotherhood" of man are the solutions to this problem. The character Gabriel Grimes says that white people are wicked because they are not to be trusted and because they do not love black people:

His (John Grimes') father said that all white people are wicked, and that God was going to bring them low. He said that white people were never to be trusted, and they told nothing but lies, and that no one of them had ever loved a nigger. He, John, was a nigger, and he would find out, as soon as he got a little older, how evil white people could be.²⁸

As the critic Jerry H. Bryant puts it:

The greatest paradox Baldwin has had personally to grapple with is the exclusion of blacks from the larger white culture and their development of sensibilities conditioned by and responsive to that culture. But where Wright engages in fantasies of revenge against whites for casting him out, Baldwin chooses another path to self-respect--love. The result of the successful struggle is the ability to enter the real brotherhood of humanity, and through the love that accompanies entrance into that brotherhood be born again and help others to rebirth.²⁹

J. D. Salinger, in The Catcher in the Rye, criticizes the morality upon which current American society is based. He bases his concepts on Rousseau's philosophy that man is born good, but is corrupted by institutions. "Salinger achieves this through his portrayal of Holden Caulfield. Holden flunks out of one school after another with a

²⁸James Baldwin, Go Tell It On The Mountain (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1953), p. 36.

²⁹Jerry H. Bryant, "Wright, Ellison, Baldwin--Exorcising the Demon," in Phylon 37(June 1976):186.

distinctive blend of indifference and ease."³⁰ He finds himself alienated from a society which he sees as short on compassion, but overloaded with pretense and sham. He protests against a world where even the price of a set of luggage is enough to separate preparatory-school roommates, where ambitions are hollow and the purpose of school is to gather up sufficient wisdom (knowledge) so that someday one can buy a "long, sleek, shiny Cadillac." Holden objects to the make-believe concern about the school's football team. He rebels against the pseudo-sophisticated conversations about girls, sex and liquor, which seem to be the only subjects his schoolmates find meaningful. Caulfield believes that most of his "better-adjusted" colleagues are "phonies" like the girls who meet him with false gusto and evaluate their dates according to school affiliation. The critic Albert Fowler asserts that "J. D. Salinger's picture of man sickened by society reflects the idea propounded by Rousseau and the disciples of naturalism, of the individual born good and corrupted by institutions."³¹

Paule Marshall's assessment of the morality in American society differs from that of some of the above authors, one reason being that her Brown Girl, Brownstones is a novel about immigrant blacks who, of their own volition, accepting the promise of the United States of America, went there to make their way. The small Barbadian group (Bajan, as they call themselves) lived in many ways like the poor

³⁰Charlotte Alexander, J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye: A Critical Commentary (New York: Monarch Press, 1965), p. 53.

³¹Albert Fowler, "Alien in the Rye," Modern Age 1(Fall 1959):193.

European ethnics. Given the worst and poorest-paying jobs, they worked hard, saved their money, sacrificed to educate their children for jobs better than those they had, exploited their own kind and others, looked down on other ethnics, the Trinidadians in particular, and United States blacks. Moreover, the story is richly filled with human beings. They all have the capacity to love, to make mistakes and to cling to some ideal of life. Women or mothers in this story are all strong; on the other hand, fathers are weak by design. For example, Deighton Boyce, Silla's husband, is a failure. Silla insists that his failures were failures of character. He was constantly overreaching himself, as though he wanted to fail. He studied a chosen subject too little, then took an examination in it and failed. He started in on a new machine before he had thoroughly learned it, and consequently injured himself. Those errors had nothing to do with blackness; instead, they had to do with his own character. Characteristically, Deighton thinks to himself after a bitter loss: "There were sins, perhaps, lodged in him and charging the air around him, that demanded his perpetual sacrifice." (p. 115) Deighton is a dreamer, a romantic and a lazy person, and Silla, in her fury of love and anger, drives him to his death. Silla, on the contrary, is a hard-working woman who insures the family's survival. It seems as if Marshall is describing the Women's Liberation Movement, which has markedly changed moral values. Marshall is saying that women have always worked industriously and only now are beginning to be adequately appreciated and their abilities and skills properly respected.

Some novels were selected because they not only portray another important aspect of American society but also treat a theme connected

with the human race in general. That theme is the integrity and dignity of an individual. Two of the selected novelists deal with this issue, namely William Faulkner in Intruder in the Dust and Ralph Ellison in Invisible Man.

In Intruder in the Dust Faulkner presents his views regarding the racial problem in the south within a bizarre tale involving murder, grave-robbing, and lynching. At the core of the book is the fact that black people have a natural dignity which makes them the real target of racial hatred. Lucas Beauchamp, the black character, is accused of murdering Vinson Gowrie, a white man. Lucas does not ask for pity, but for justice. His only request is that someone dig up Gowrie's body to determine the type of gun which killed him. When Chick and his Uncle Gavin exhume the coffin they do not find Vinson Gowrie. Instead, they unearth Jake Montgomery. Later questioning of Lucas reveals that Crawford Gowrie has murdered his brother Vinson; Lucas Beauchamp is found innocent. Thus Chick is driven by his integrity to save innocent Lucas from being lynched. Also, in the final analysis, Lucas' dignity and integrity are reckoned with by the white society.

Ralph Ellison also treats the theme of integrity and the dignity of an individual. His nameless black protagonist realizes that he is in fact "invisible." In endeavoring to establish his dignity and integrity as a human being, he goes through various bitter experiences which lead him to understand the terrible condition of black people in the United States. Nevertheless, the protagonist discovers that human beings invariably should be treated with integrity and dignity.

Some of the novels were chosen because they treat one of the most important aspects of human life, religion and its role for mankind in

general as well as for American society in particular. Among the novels chosen for this reason is Ernest Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises, in which the author contrasts paganism and Christian orthodoxy. He does so by giving an account of a certain fiesta of San Fermin, which contrasts the staunch Catholic Jake Barnes with the pagan Brett Ashley. The foreign intruder Brett is not allowed to enter the cathedral. Even later, when she succeeds in entering the San Fermin chapel to pray for Romero's success, she is very uncomfortable. On the other hand, Jake is a Christian, a religious man who attends masses at the cathedral before and during fiesta week. Hemingway contrasts the struggle between paganism and Christianity through symbolism. He presents a religious fiesta which goes on for seven days.

That afternoon was the big religious procession. San Fermin was translated from one church to another. In the procession were all the dignitaries, civil and religious. We could not see them because the crowd was too great. Ahead of the formal procession and behind it danced the riau riau dancers. There was one mass of yellow shirts dancing up and down in the crowd. All we could see of the procession through the closely pressed people that crowded all the side streets and curbs were the great giants, cigar store Indians, thirty feet high, moors, a king and queen, whirling and waltzing solemnly to the riau riau.³²

The religious account is dramatized through Jake and Brett. Jake is a religious man. He is also a churchgoer. On the Saturday before the fiesta begins Brett accompanies him.

I went to church a couple of times, once with Brett. She said she wanted to hear me go to confession, but I told her that not only was it impossible but it was not as interesting as it sounded, and, besides, it would be in a language she did not

³²Ernest Hemingway, The Sun Also Rises (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), p. 155.

know. We met Cohn as we came out of church, and although it was obvious he had followed us, yet he was very pleasant and nice, and we all three went for a walk out to the gypsy camp, and Brett had her fortune told.³³

The intent of this episode is quite plain. It contrasts Christianity and paganism. The language Brett does not know is the language of the Christian religion. However, when she later goes to have her fortune told at a gypsy camp, she hears a language which she does not understand.

The point about religion that Hemingway is making here is that some young post-World War I people were irreligious or hedonistic, as well as worshippers of false gods, as represented by Brett Ashley. On the other hand, some were Christians, as evidenced in the sincere worship of Jake Barnes. Hemingway also treats some religious elements by quoting from the Book of Ecclesiastes to provide the first epigraph of The Sun Also

Rises:

One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever.... The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to the place where he arose.... The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits.... All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.³⁴

The significance of the quotation is that it is a Biblical statement that while all things shall pass away, neither the earth nor the Lord's word will.

³³Ibid., pp. 150-151.

³⁴Ecclesiastes 1, Hemingway's first epigraph for The Sun Also Rises.

In The Catcher in the Rye Salinger includes concepts and criticisms of religion. In the increasing seriousness of his reflections, Holden Caulfield ponders religion. He evinces a pragmatic bent in such matters; his ethical judgements of the disciples arise from a strictly twentieth-century point of view. Christ is accepted by Holden as a pure ideal, but the lesser representatives of Christianity are, as Holden sees them, the frail human element that corrupts. Thus, the disciples are harsher judges of their fellow man than God would be, as Holden says:

I felt like praying or something, when I was in bed, but I couldn't do it. I can't always pray when I feel like it. In the first place, I'm sort of an atheist. I like Jesus and all, but I don't care too much for most of the other stuff in the Bible. Take the disciples, for instance. They annoy the hell out of me, if you want to know the truth. They were all right after Jesus was dead and all, but while He was alive, they were about as much use to Him as a hole in the head. All they did was keep letting Him down. I like almost anybody in the Bible better than the disciples. If you want to know the truth, the guy I like best in the Bible, next to Jesus, was that lunatic and all, that lived in the tombs and kept cutting himself with stones. I like him ten times as much as the disciples, that poor bastard.³⁵

Even when he was in school, Holden used to have arguments with his fellow-students about what he feels about Jesus and the disciples.

I used to get in quite a few arguments about it when I was at Whooton School, with this boy ... Arthur Childs. Old Childs was a Quaker and all ... and I liked him, but I could never see eye to eye with him on a lot of stuff in the Bible, especially the disciples. He kept telling me if I didn't like the disciples, then I didn't like Jesus and all. He said that because Jesus picked the disciples, you were supposed to like them. I said I knew He picked them, but that He picked them at random. I said He didn't have time to go around analyzing

³⁵J. D. Salinger, The Catcher in the Rye (New York: Bantam Books), p. 99.

everybody. I said I wasn't blaming Jesus or anything. It wasn't His fault that He didn't have any time. I ... asked old Childs if he thought Judas ... went to Hell after he committed suicide. Childs said certainly. That's exactly where I disagreed with him.³⁶

Holden staunchly believes that Jesus would have been fairer to Judas than would have the disciples.

I said I'd bet a thousand bucks that Jesus never sent old Judas to Hell. ... I think any one of the disciples would've sent him to Hell and all, and fast, too, but I'll bet anything Jesus didn't do it. Old Childs said the trouble with me was that I didn't go to church or anything. He was right about that, in a way. I don't. In the first place, my parents are different religions, and all the children in our family are atheists. If you want to know the truth, I can't even stand ministers. The ones they've had at every school I've gone to, they all have these Holy Joe voices when they start giving their sermons. God, I hate that. I don't see why the hell they can't talk in their natural voice. They sound so phony when they talk.³⁷

Thus, through Holden, Salinger provides his own heterodox views on Jesus and His disciples.

Another author in this study who treats various aspects of the role of religion in American society is James Baldwin in his novel Go Tell It On the Mountain. That novel is concerned with a family in Harlem. The father is an angry, eloquent store-front preacher, unable to conquer the lusts of his flesh or truly to communicate with his children. The mother is of superb stoic courage in the face of the tragedies of life. The father's older, illegitimate son was a proud, bitter, doomed rebel. The younger, developing son, John Grimes, who is the protagonist of the novel, is a sensitive boy making the difficult passage to manhood and

³⁶Ibid., p. 100.

³⁷Ibid.

desperately searching for his own identity through religion. John Grimes is always watching, looking and seeking for something. That something is identity. Baldwin emphasizes John's watchfulness to show that he is in the stage of aspiring, for through aspiring one eventually achieves. Here Baldwin is portraying black people's struggle to achieve identity through religion.

Baldwin also believes that through religion black people have been misled and brainwashed. The effect of religion has been debilitating and confusing to poor city blacks, according to him.

Baldwin presents two main groups of religious believers. The first category, the church hypocrite, is generally depicted as the most dehumanized group to which one could belong. Gabriel Grimes is one of Baldwin's hypocrites, and is also Elizabeth's husband, John's Southern evangelist stepfather and Deacon of the Temple of the Fire Baptized. Although he professes godly love, he cherishes the idea of revenge, the thought of overcoming white domination, while he is still singing praises and shouting hallelujah to God during worship services. That is to say, religion has caused some blacks to be hypocrites within the church, rather than to confront their real problems.

The second group, that is, the mass of the unsophisticated true believers, is often ridiculed by Baldwin. Examples of this group are Sister McCandless; Praying Mother Washington; Florence, who is Gabriel's sister; Elizabeth, the wife of Gabriel; Elisha; Sister Price; and Father James. Perhaps the most fully portrayed characters in this group are Florence and Elizabeth. Both accept religion as a tool to help them escape their daily and personal problems. Florence's illness and her fear of death lead her to accept the church. On the other hand,

Elizabeth's frustrations, which lead her to lean on religion, are her lover's (Richard's) death and her pregnancy out of wedlock. It is Richard's child that she is carrying. One must also note that Baldwin never suggests that faith itself is an indication of cowardice or intellectual inferiority, although John Grimes resentfully tends to believe so. Baldwin is certain that whites have used it to submerge blacks as human beings and that all too many black clergymen have been unworthy of their influential positions.

Religion is also treated in Paule Marshall's Brown Girl, Brownstones. After an unpleasant experience in a hospital Deighton Boyce becomes very religious. He reads obsolete newspapers because, although old, "what they had to say was new." (p. 160) Those papers were entitled "The New Light" (p. 160) and their headlines were "I AM THE FATHER UNIVERSAL," "I AM THE TRUE AND LIVING JEHOVAH," "NEW BIRTH AND REDEMPTION IN GOD..." (p. 160) Ina, Deighton's daughter, also became very religious. "She suddenly joined St. Mathew's Episcopal Church and began her preparations for confirmation. At meals, while Deighton read "The New Light" she read the "Articles of Religion." (p. 161) One Sunday, Deighton brought home a framed photograph of the kindly man in "The New Light" called "Father Peace, God Incarnate." (p. 161) Later on, Deighton took his family to see Father Peace. There are many other religious people, for example, a black lady who praises Father Peace; that is, "Father, Father, I feel the vibrations." (p. 165) Another old woman does the same:

"Beautiful, beautiful Father! I knowed he's God. I knowed it, listen to me. I was ailing. Father knowed how many years. Them doctors had done given up on me. Then one day, Father came. There was a gold halo all around his sweet head

and he said, 'Rise up and walk, my sweetheart.' And peace, sisters and brothers, I been walking ever since." (p. 165)

Thus Father Peace heals the sick. Later on, Father Peace recognizes Deighton as one of his followers. Now that Deighton has found God, when Selina refers to him as "Father," he says, "You mustn't call me 'Daddy.' Din' you hear fatherself say there ain' no father or mother in the kingdom? I'm Brother Boyce. Wunna must call me that!" (p. 171)

The children are surprised at this, and they ask Deighton whom should they call Daddy? To this he says, "Father says there's no marrying. No children. He is the only Father and we's all his children and brothers and sisters to one another, Father says." (p. 172) Deighton's conversion to religion is met with opposition and contradiction from his wife Silla. Silla does not believe in Deighton's lifestyle. She does not believe in Deighton's "Father Peace," either. According to Silla, "Life? Lemme tell you life ain' up in no Father Peace kingdom. It out here scuffling to get by. And having little something so you can keep your head up and not have these white people push you 'bout like you's cattle. That's what it is." (p. 172) Silla staunchly rejects her husband's philosophy and religion. "But be damn you, don you know you's flying the face of God with this foolishness?" (p. 173) In fact, according to Silla, Boyce does not behave like a true "Bajan" or Barbadian. "But where you come outta, nuh? You ain' no real-real Bajan man. What Bajan would have his head turn by some bogus god? Tell me!" (p. 172) If he were a true Bajan, says Silla, her husband would be more outgoing. But Deighton is not outgoing; he cannot open up a business like other Bajan people such as Percy Challenor, who once held the same job as Deighton. Now Percy Challenor has opened a big office on Fulton

Street. All the West Indians out there, broods Silla, are taking classes from Jewish people so that they can establish a business, but not Deighton.

Silla is very critical of her husband's religious practices. Instead of spending so much time reading 'The New Light' or being brainwashed out of the real world, Deighton, thinks Silla, should think of ways of making money.

Thus Paule Marshall, like James Baldwin, J. D. Salinger and Ernest Hemingway, treats the theme of religion in her novel. While Hemingway contrasts paganism and Christianity, Salinger evinces a pragmatic bent in such matters as judgment of the disciples and of Christ. Baldwin, on the other hand, both explores the search for identity of black people through religion and shows how religion has confused and brainwashed some black people in the prosperous urban areas and ghettos alike. Similarly, Marshall's religious character Deighton Boyce refuses to face life as it is. It is in part because these authors treat religion as an important aspect of human life that the above novels were chosen for this study.

Another important theme that led to the selection of these novels is adolescence, a common theme in most of them. Adolescence can be an exciting topic for post-secondary students, the age group for which this course is prepared. Intruder in the Dust on one level deals with the moral coming of age of a sixteen-year-old white boy, Charles (Chick) Mallison, through his relationship with Lucas Beauchamp, an old black man whom he helps to prove innocent of murder. Faulkner uses Mallison to represent the malleable, less rigid attitude of the young, as opposed to the conservative quality of adult thinking and action in the south.

Another novel which treats the theme of adolescence is The Catcher in the Rye. Salinger's depiction of Holden is considered one of the most convincing portrayals of an adolescent in literature. Intelligent, sensitive, imaginative, Holden desires acceptance into the adult world even though he is highly aware of its "phoniness." In general, Holden's environment can be considered unstable and superficial. He rejects the traditions of school because they are artificial, lacking depth and warmth. His loneliness and rebellion come from his rejection of the false conventions and materialistic values that surround him. Because Holden fails in school, uses vulgar expressions, gets drunk and is very interested in sex, one might consider him to have low moral standards. Although these common adolescent characteristics may not fit in with our idealistic conception of a teen-ager, Holden represents the lonely American youth seeking to establish a moral code based on transcendent values. Holden's wealthy background, however, allows him to deprecate all the middle-class, materialistic concerns of our society. His ambition to be the "catcher in the rye" symbolizes his desire to establish a moral order, thus guarding the young and innocent, as opposed to the corrupt adults. Humorous as well as honest, but by no means perfect, he searches for some purposeful relationships; he is not yet prepared for an adult role in society.³⁸

Holden's interest in everything stems from his youthful search for experience and freedom. This general but undefined interest in things

³⁸Charlotte Alexander, J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye: A Critical Commentary, p. 8.

demonstrates his undeveloped sensibility. "It is important to realize that other characters can be seen and understood only through this sensibility; that is, Holden's consciousness is the consciousness of the entire novel--characters emerge only as they are mirrored in this consciousness. On the surface we know only what Holden tells us about these people."³⁹

Is he defeated by society, or will he change society? His general breakdown may have been brought about by society, but the community does lead him back to reality with a new awareness. Holden's new awareness, however, will not change society. Like Huck Finn, Holden is a youth whose social significance must be evaluated in practical terms.

Baldwin also depicts the crisis of adolescence in Go Tell It On The Mountain. The novel centers on John Grimes, a sensitive boy who at an early age developed a distaste for the church because it was forced upon him. In awe and fear, he watches the saints perform during the services. When they sing, John believes that God is near. However, when they stop singing, his disbelief returns. John's battle is to reach salvation or God without acknowledging Gabriel as his father; he must reconcile flesh and spirit, so as to deny Gabriel's combination of gross sensuality and righteousness.

Ralph Ellison also creates a nameless narrator-hero, still an adolescent, who graduates from high school at the beginning of the novel. As the novel progresses, that nameless protagonist experiences life, moving from an innocent adolescence towards the chaotic adult

³⁹Ibid., p. 9.

world. Invisible Man is actually narrated by a nameless black man living in a coal cellar lighted by 1,369 bulbs. He is now an alienated adult who has attempted to be successful in the world of white society and has painfully come to the realization that he is in fact "invisible." This search is for both individual identity and racial meaning in his passage from innocence to experience in American society.

One of the novels in this study whose significance lies partially in their treatment of adolescence is Paule Marshall's Brown Girl, Brownstones. This novel is mainly the story of Selina Boyce's passage from childhood to womanhood. Most of the late events are seen from her perspective, and her consciousness is informed by them. However, the novel is not solely devoted to Selina's rites of passage, but also deals with her family, her lover, the Bajans and the Brooklyn brownstones that house them and play a great part in their lives. As Adam David Miller says:

Selina is to be considered in relation to her mother and father, as she is a key figure in their fight with each other. Her growing up is tied closely with her ability to see herself in her mother and her mother in her. Selina fought the realization that she was her mother's child rather than her father's because she loved her father dearly and thought she hated her mother while at the same time admiring her.⁴⁰

Selina loved her father so dearly that she spent most of her girlhood defending Deighton when Silla attacked him. She had no feeling for her mother's strength until she realized that it was very much like her

⁴⁰Adam David Miller, review of Brown Girl, Brownstones, by Paule Marshall, Black Scholar 3(May 1972):56-58.

own. So it was only when Selina most felt herself a woman that she recognized her mother in herself. Racially, Selina does not identify with the problems of U. S. blacks until she is forced to realize that she too may suffer by being black. Thus Marshall vividly treats the problems of an adolescent who is caught between respect for her hard-working, ambitious mother, who longs for a brownstone house, and her deep love for her easy-going and romantic father.

Thus, some of the novels were chosen for this study because they vividly treat some of the difficulties of adolescence.

Most of the novels were selected for this paper because of their treatment of aspects of American life in which Kenyan students might be especially interested. What kinds of people live in the United States, one may ask. Blacks and whites form two distinct groups of the people in America, and that fact is reflected in the novels studied in this paper. For example, the characters in Sister Carrie, The Sun Also Rises, The Great Gatsby and The Catcher in the Rye are all whites, whereas in Faulkner's Intruder in the Dust there are both blacks and whites. On the other hand, some of the novels by black authors have predominantly black characters and a few white ones. These include Invisible Man, Go Tell It On The Mountain and finally, Brown Girl, Brownstones. That various immigrants also live in the United States is reflected in one of the novels. Brown Girl, Brownstones concerns a family of Barbadian immigrants residing in New York.

Kenyan students might also want to know about American family life, which various ones of these novels depict. These include Sister Carrie, The Great Gatsby, Go Tell It On The Mountain and Brown Girl, Brownstones. In Sister Carrie the white Hurstwood family are rich and

very class-conscious. Mrs. Hurstwood and her daughter are very proud, as well as snobbish, people. Fitzgerald develops his theme of the ambivalent power of wealth, which both enormously expands life and can corrupt it by irremediably damaging the wealthy and morally enfeebled individual with immense power. In The Great Gatsby Fitzgerald describes the Yale graduate Tom Buchanan as enormously wealthy and appallingly distorted by his privileges. Despite that fact, and his manifestly inferior intelligence, Buchanan easily dazzles the frustrated Myrtle Wilson and keeps her as his mistress until her accidental death. What the above authors are saying about American families in the early part of the twentieth century is that their concern for materialism was greater than their concern for their moral obligations, including familial ones. Go Tell It On The Mountain mainly treats black families such as the Grimes family and their religious dilemma, with some attention to Florence and her husband Frank and their racial problem. Finally, Brown Girl, Brownstones portrays the Boyce family, a family of West Indian origin trying to shape their communal life in New York. The American ideals of freedom and equality extend into the family. American women are noted for their independence. They participate equally with men in many activities outside their homes. Slightly more than fifty-two percent of all married women have jobs outside their homes.⁴¹ That is also true in Paule Marshall's Brown Girl, Brownstones,

⁴¹Bruce Chapman, et. al., Statistical Abstract of the United States: National Data Book and Guide to Sources, 1982-1983. 103rd edition (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1983), pp. 749-50.

where the vital female characters are all more independent and therefore much stronger than the male characters.

Kenyan students may also be interested in knowing the details of the places of residence of most Americans.

Americans are people on the move. Every year one of every five Americans moves to a new place of residence. The person may simply move to a larger house. He or she may be transferred to another town by an employer. Or, like the early pioneers, the person may seek a new life and new opportunities in a different section of the nation.⁴²

Various examples from the novels under study illustrate this. For example, Carrie Meeber in Sister Carrie leaves her hometown in Wisconsin to find a job in Chicago and later travels to New York. In Go Tell It On The Mountain Richard and Elizabeth leave the south for New York City. The same thing occurs in Invisible Man when the protagonist, after being expelled from college, leaves the south for New York City.

One other fact the Kenyan students might want to know about the United States is: Which are its chief cities? "More than seventy-five of every one hundred Americans live in metropolitan areas."⁴³ Densely populated cities include New York, the Los Angeles-Long Beach area, Chicago, Philadelphia, Houston, Detroit and Atlanta. Of the above-named cities, those that are mentioned recurringly in the novels studied in this paper are Chicago and New York. The events in Sister Carrie revolve around these two cities. The Great Gatsby is set in New York City and Long Island. Similarly, the plot of The Catcher in the Rye

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

revolves around the three-day experiences of Holden, mainly occurring in New York City. Also, although some of the events of Invisible Man take place in a small city and a Negro college in the south, most are set in New York City. Brown Girl, Brownstones is set in Brooklyn, New York. Thus, the novels give insight into the lives, struggles and experiences of the American population who live in urban centers.

Religion in the United States is another aspect of life that Kenyan students may be interested to know.

The United States has no laws requiring any person to belong to any religious group. Complete freedom of worship is guaranteed by Amendment I of the United States Constitution. Almost two-thirds of the population belong to an organized religious group, Christians, and almost five percent are Jews. A relatively small number of Americans belong to the Islamic faith or to various Eastern religions, such as Buddhism. About two-thirds of the Christians are Protestants. The largest Protestant groups are the Baptists, Lutherans, and Methodists. The Roman Catholic Church has more members than any single Protestant group.⁴⁴

Most of the novels used in this study suggest that most people in the United States are religious. One of the authors, Ernest Hemingway in The Sun Also Rises, contrasts paganism and Christian orthodoxy in the portrayal of two characters, Jake and Brett. Jake is a religious man. Although Jake's respect for the church remains a part of his world-view, his religious insecurity and his certainty that he has been alienated from his boyhood faith permanently by his experiences are indicated in the novel. Brett, on the other hand, is not religious, nor does she understand the language used in the Catholic ritual of confession. In The Catcher in the Rye Holden accepts Jesus as a pure ideal, but he sees

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 54-55.

the disciples to be harsher judges of their fellow men than God would be. What is Holden's attitude toward religion, one may ask. Holden satirizes the sermon by the wealthy undertaker. He sees the false image that is created through the dubious connection of spirituality with material success. For the same reason he admires the charity of the nuns. He feels that they are directly committed to the principle of charity. Yet he pities them, even though they stand in direct contrast to the false "ego-satisfying" charity of some of his socialite neighbors, because they appear out of touch with reality.⁴⁵ Baldwin approaches religion from another angle. He criticizes religion in black people's lives as having misled and brainwashed them to a certain extent. Paule Marshall in Brown Girl, Brownstones seems to hold the same message as Baldwin's when Deighton Boyce, a religious man, fails to face life realistically. Deighton refuses to permit his children to call him father, for "Father Peace" has said that there is no mother or father in the kingdom of heaven. Also, Deighton becomes involved with religion so deeply that he cannot work to support his family.

Therefore, through some of the novels chosen for this study the Kenyan students may learn of religion in the United States and of the authors' attitudes and beliefs regarding the status, functions and services of religion in the country.

Kenyan students would be interested in knowing about the American system of education.

⁴⁵Charlotte Alexander, J. D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye": A Critical Commentary, p. 66.

Americans believe that every person should have the opportunity to receive the best possible education to develop the person's talents and abilities. Today about 60 million Americans attend some kind of school, college, or university. Millions of other Americans are enrolled in adult education courses. Almost all children in the United States receive at least an eighth-grade education.⁴⁶

Some of the novels chosen for this study treat some aspects of education in the United States.

The Catcher in the Rye is one of the novels examining concerns about the educational system in America. As a preparatory-school dropout, Caulfield, the adolescent hero, is in search of self-understanding and a meaning for his life. Holden tries to explain to Mr. Antolini why he failed in school. Mr. Antolini argues that there must be some order, that there is a time and a place for everything. Holden refers to a speech class he had to take, taught by an instructor who proved unwilling to make the slightest adjustment of his pedagogy to the needs of a timid student whom he underrated and thus treated unfairly. As Holden says:

For instance, he (the student) made this speech about this farm his father bought in Vermont. They (other students) kept yelling 'Digression!' at him the whole time he was making it, and this teacher, Mr. Vinson, gave him an F on it because he hadn't told what kind of animals and vegetables and stuff grew on the farm and all. (pp. 183-184)

Holden agrees that particular student was digressing from the subject. However, Holden feels that the digressive material was "nice." (p. 184) Holden points out that sometimes the realization of just what interests a person is born when that person is talking about something else

⁴⁶Bruce Chapman, et. al., Statistical Abstract of the United States, pp. 131-132.

entirely. Both Holden and Antolini claim partial justification for their differing points of view. Holden gives the thesis that wisdom is superior to mere intelligence; wisdom is the use and application of intelligence in a compassionate manner. He believes that wisdom is, or should be, a school's primary concern. Knowledge should make one happier and wiser. The information he received at school did not make him happier and was, therefore, not knowledge in its truest sense. However, Mr. Antolini, a young instructor at New York University, tells him some of the advantages of an academic education.

If you go along with it any considerable distance, it'll begin to give you an idea what size mind you have. What it'll fit and, maybe, what it won't. After a while, you'll have an idea what kind of thoughts your particular size mind should be wearing. For one thing, it may save you an extraordinary amount of time trying on ideas that don't suit you, aren't becoming to you. You'll begin to know your true measurement and dress your mind accordingly.⁴⁷

It is one of Holden's more significant lessons that, though Mr. Antolini may not be perfect, he can be helpful. "Thus, this teacher weakens Holden's tenacious grip on the either-or reasoning that often results in a paralysis of action or in escapism."⁴⁸ Salinger seems to be criticizing the system of education in the country, insisting that it should enable people to be more understanding, wiser and more knowledgeable and to make their lives intelligent, which it does not do, according to Caulfield.

⁴⁷J. D. Salinger, The Catcher in the Rye, p. 190.

⁴⁸Charlotte Alexander, J. D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye": A Critical Commentary, p. 46.

Invisible Man also examines the subject of education. In it a black teenager is in pursuit of an education. Nonetheless, because of the racial problems in the United States, that teenager is unable to obtain his education. If it were not for the racial problem, the protagonist would not have been expelled from school for the mere reason that he took a white trustee of the school to a place where disabled black veterans are taken for a day of whiskey and women. Dr. Bledsoe, the president of the college the protagonist attends, expels the student because he would rather the protagonist try to impress the white man by taking him to "decent places."

What is Ellison saying about the subject of education? He seems to say that educational conditions for black people in the United States have not been easy. Dr. Bledsoe, after expelling the protagonist from college, writes a supposed recommendation letter for him. He writes a letter of condemnation so that the protagonist will be unable to use it to get a job. (p. 240) It is significant to note that the black college which the protagonist attends is in the segregated South and its educated black scholar-administrator betrays one of his own students, specifically because the student took a white man to a black night club. Thus, the relentless Bledsoe is interested only in the conformity of his school's students to a standard of behavior which will preserve him in his current position of power. Indeed, he shares that trait, which Ellison so loathes, with other black educators and many of their white colleagues. Thus education has not enabled such people to do justice to others, mostly blacks.

In essence, what Ellison is saying about education is that educational conditions for black people have not been easy since times

of slavery. The white system of education has not helped the black man to be responsible to his own race, as seen in Dr. Bledsoe. If it had been beneficial to the black man, then Dr. Bledsoe would have been both understanding and lenient to the young protagonist. The young man did the only thing he could for Norton, a white trustee of the college. The whiskey Norton needed could only have been obtained at the Golden Day, but the youth, according to Dr. Bledsoe's philosophy, has committed the unpardonable crime of taking a white man where the white man wanted to go, rather than where Bledsoe wanted him to go. In chastising the student for taking Norton to the Golden Day, Dr. Bledsoe reveals his bigotry when he calls him "nigger," a term of exceptionally derogatory connotations and one which reveals that Dr. Bledsoe himself looks upon the Negro as inferior. Ellison also shows that the system is quite a frustration and a handicap to black people's advancement in education. That reality is evidenced by the fact that the black protagonist is unable to complete his education. Dr. Bledsoe is egocentric, very cruel and irresponsible to the black race. He should have given a chance to the protagonist to advance his education. Otherwise, he should have given him a positive recommendation letter which would enable him to get a job. In sum, however, one might add that educational conditions for black people have improved tremendously from the 1960's to the present. Many black people have achieved higher education.

Likewise, in Brown Girl, Brownstones Paule Marshall also looks at the subject of education. She tells the story of immigrant blacks who, accepting the promise of this country, came here, worked hard, saved their money, and constantly sacrificed to educate their children. Although Selina Boyce has acquired a college education, she experiences

maddening dehumanization and humiliation by a white person in the incident in which she is patronized by a white friend's mother, who compares her to her West Indian maid. Later on, Selina wins a scholarship for further studies, but does not accept it because she thinks she does not deserve it. Deighton, Selina's father, begins but does not complete some accounting classes, for his wife has told him that owing to discrimination against blacks in America his education might just be wasted. He might not get the job he deserves. What Marshall is saying about education for black Barbadians in the United States is that they can acquire it if they work hard. Nonetheless, education for them does not necessarily guarantee good jobs. They will still be discriminated against in the job market because of being black and foreigners.

Thus The Catcher in the Rye, Invisible Man and Brown Girl, Brownstones deal in part with the subject of education in one way or another.

Kenyan students might also be interested to learn something about the aesthetic activities presented in those novels, some of which may concern people in other places of the world. Others may be centered on the people of the United States. Examples of those activities are dance, music and theater. Paule Marshall deals with the music and dance of Barbadian culture. The music reflects the Deighton family's nostalgia for Barbados. While they are dancing, others are singing:

Now, everybody love their carnival,
Lord, don stop the carnival.
Yes, carnival is a decent Bacchanal,
Lord, don stop the carnival.
All the West Indians love their carnival,
Lord, don stop the carnival. (p. 147)

Most of the songs indicate that, although the Barbadians would like to stay in the United States of America, they cannot forget their homeland.

Small island boy, go back where you come from.
 Small island boy, go back where you come from.
 You come from Trinidad in a fishing boat,
 And now you wearing a big overcoat!
 Small island boy, go back where you really come from.
 You see them Bajans, they're the worse of them all!
 You hear them say 'I ain't gwine back at all.'
 They come by the one and they come by the two,
 And now you see them all over Lenox Avenue.
 Small island boy, go back where you really come from... (p. 148)

The point being made by this song is that while Deighton Boyce has hoped to be admired at the party at which it is sung, he is being humiliated, rather cruelly, by the dialect song which satirizes Barbadian immigrants. Deighton is being mocked by his fellow-Bajans by the song with which they greet him. They do so because of his high spirits, his pride and his relatively expensive new clothing, bought partly for the party. They ask him sarcastically to go back to his home, Barbados. Selina is also a dancer who, after she is elected vice-president of the Young Associates, thinks that she is following in the footsteps of Isadora Duncan, an early twenties American dancer at the forefront of the modern dance movement. "Just think, I'll be on stage alone. Me, following in the footsteps of Isadora Duncan! Watch, I'll do it. It (dancing) begins with birth, naturally." (p. 275)

In The Sun Also Rises Hemingway treats dance and music among his characters. Jake, Bill and Cohn go to Pamplona, where, during the seven-day carnival, Spanish dances and music help furnish the excitement

of that hectic week. "The dancing kept up, ... the voices went on."⁴⁹ Kenyan students would be happy to learn something about unfamiliar dance and music through Hemingway and Marshall.

Kenyan students might be excited to be introduced through the novels to some of the history of the United States. None of the selected works belongs to the genre of historical novels, and none to a great extent treats the facts of history; however, some of them reflect the effects of such major historical events as World War I and World War II on the people of the United States, and some mention famous historical figures like Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois. The Sun Also Rises and The Great Gatsby portray the lost generation, that is, the generation which existed after the First World War, a generation which spent much time seeking pleasure. The First and Second World Wars are two formative historical world events, and through the above-cited novels the students can learn something about those two great convulsions and their effects.

Invisible Man is a literary interpretation of the history of the black American during the first forty years of the twentieth century. As Russell C. Fischer has indicated, the first section of Invisible Man deals with the position of Booker T. Washington in the south, the second section with the black migration to the north and the encounter with an urban industrial society, and the final section treats black people's involvement in the communist party.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Ernest Hemingway, The Sun Also Rises, p. 154.

⁵⁰Russell G. Fischer, "Invisible Man as History." College Language Association Journal 17(March 1974):338.

Ellison's novel is as true to history as Fischer says. There is much in the novel to illustrate that fact. For example, the accommodationist philosophy of the protagonist is similar to that of Booker T. Washington, as Fischer suggests. It is that philosophy which enables the protagonist to win a scholarship to the black college.

Ellison's narrator so thoroughly and innocently subscribes to the Washingtonian ethic that, when he is selected to give the valedictory address at his high school, he echoes both Washington's ideas and his rhetoric. Telling his Negro classmates to cultivate friendly relations with their white neighbors, the narrator quotes the key line of Washington's Atlanta proclamation address, 'Cast down your bucket where you are,' for, it is implied, if the colored southerners look for water elsewhere, they may die of thirst. Likewise, the narrator uses the Washingtonian phrase, 'Social Responsibility' to define the role the Negro should play in the south.⁵¹

In his first role, as an ambitious and naive student at a southern college, the hero is subject to and accepts white supremacy and the accommodationist policies of Booker T. Washington which were prominent before the First World War. In his second role, as a factory worker at Liberty Paints, the narrator undergoes the experiences of the southern Negro coming north after 1915 and confronting an urban industrial environment where he is used by employers and distributed by unions, and where attempts are made to destroy his racial and cultural identity. In his third role, as a political organizer for the Brotherhood, the protagonist embraces Communism. As did several Negro intellectuals during the 1930's, he encounters black nationalism reminiscent of Marcus Garvey's movement, only to be betrayed by the former and to reject the latter, and he experiences a riot similar to the Harlem riot of March, 1935.

In his various roles, Ellison's hero has experienced three major epochs of Negro American history from Reconstruction to the Second World War, and it is when he realizes that throughout his life he has been blind to his true situation that the hero is forced to come to terms with his history. Trapped in

⁵¹Richard Kostelanetz, "The Politics of Ellison's Booker: Invisible Man as Symbolic History," Chicago Review 19(December 1967):5.

the blackness of a manhole, the only way the hero can escape is to burn the symbols of his past which have accumulated in his briefcase since the beginning of the novel. The narrator burns his high school diploma, Clifton's Sambo doll, the letter from Jack, and the paper containing his Brotherhood name. Thus Ellison's hero attains an understanding of his condition only by confronting and casting aside the illusions of his past.⁵²

In this chapter the rationale for the selections of the novels was discussed. In the next two chapters an analysis of the critical discussion of the eight novels chosen for this study, each in its chronological position, considering its themes and techniques, will be undertaken.

⁵²Russell G. Fischer, "Invisible Man as History," p. 367.

CHAPTER FOUR

CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF THE SELECTED NOVELS, 1900-1948

As stated earlier, this study designs a literature course in the twentieth-century American novel for East African or African post-secondary students such as those in Kenya. The novels to be studied cover the period 1900-1959. Eight novels were chosen for study during a thirteen-week term. In this chapter four novels covering the period 1900-1948 will be discussed in their chronological order. For all the novels, the same novelistic elements will be discussed. Those elements will be treated in the same sequence for each novel.

The first novel discussed is Sister Carrie by Theodore Dreiser. Dreiser, born in Sullivan, Indiana in 1871, received his early education in the public schools of the state. He attended Indiana University briefly before embarking on a journalistic career (in Chicago, St. Louis, and Pittsburgh) which would also provide the springboard for his fiction. By the time he became editor-in-chief of Butterick Publications (in 1907) in New York City, his first novel, Sister Carrie (1900), had been published. To understand Dreiser's ideas as presented in Sister Carrie one needs as background the knowledge of three forces which directly influenced him as a man and as a writer, namely, the conditions of his own personal life; the spirit of the times in which he lived; and the literature which he had read. These three forces shaped Dreiser's criticism of existing conditions in America.

The conditions of Dreiser's personal life shaped most of the events which he describes in Sister Carrie. He was born and brought up in an atmosphere of poverty, rootlessness and religious dogmatism. His father was German, a strict Catholic. His son knew what it meant to live on the "wrong side of the tracks," to hunger for material success and pleasure, and to resent the idealistic religiosity of a father who was an economic failure. In fact, he has related the facts and feelings of his life up to age twenty-three in A Book About Myself¹, describing, with the same documentary honesty and non-moralizing frankness he always employed in his fiction, the details of a youthful theft; his father's increasing loss of initiative and ability to cope with the business world; and his own tenderness toward his mother, who represented strength and devotion. As Dreiser puts it, his family seemed in retrospect "of a peculiarly nebulous, emotional, unorganized and traditionless character."² Yet, along with the financial disaster and futility (for even his beloved mother was a poor manager), as well as their being occasionally ostracized by the community for breaking the conventional rules of propriety, there was warmth. Much of Dreiser's fiction, including Sister Carrie, is peopled with figures from his family--father, mother, sisters, brothers--as well as filled with remembered happenings. Many of the aspects and episodes of Sister

¹Richard Lehan, Theodore Dreiser: His World and His Novels (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), pp. 125-126.

²Charlotte A. Alexander, Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie (New York: Monarch Press, Inc., 1965), p. 5, quoting Theodore Dreiser, A Book About Myself (New York: Boni and Liveright, Inc., 1922), p. 371.

Carrie, from the midwestern heroine and her two lovers (associated with exactly similar incidents in the lives of Dreiser's sisters, for example) to the streetcar strike, which resembles one covered by the author while he worked for the Toledo Blade, can be considered autobiographical.

Clearly, the force of Dreiser's personal life and environment had tremendous influence upon him as man and writer. His poverty-stricken family drifted about the west, and in most of the communities he moved in that stratum of society where puritanic restraints had no weight. His antagonism to his father's stern religious intolerance, his involvement with the loose morality of his associates and neighbors, and, later, the revelation of the sordidness of life that he received as a newspaperman aided in the development of his belief that all religions are absurdities, that all moral controls are futile and that life is casual and cruel.³

Another force, the spirit of the times in which he lived, had a decided effect upon Dreiser as a man and as a writer. His naturalistic view of life could hardly fail to be reinforced by the spectacle of urban life in America during the latter years of the nineteenth century. In the declining years of that century, several forces were at work which were destined to bring the most far-reaching changes into the life of every American. Chief among these forces was industrialism. The use of inventions to apply mechanical power to industry, the expansion of production, the concentration of the laboring classes in

³Richard Lehan, Theodore Dreiser, His World and His Novels, pp. 6-7.

factory areas and slums, the increment of unemployment as men were replaced by machines, the consequent decline of wages to a mere subsistence level--all affected American life.

During the industrial revolution both towns and cities were growing rapidly. Shops, factories and stores were multiplying, and people were crowding from the country and towns into cities. Tens of thousands of immigrants settled in Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Chicago. Inevitably, with the industrialization of the country, class-consciousness among Americans became more acute.⁴ Dreiser witnessed the factories and railways, the palaces and slums, and came to believe that men were divided into the strong and the weak, either victors or vanquished. He observed the lack of virtue and even of human intelligence, not on the part of a few, but of nearly everybody.⁵ In addition, "He had the same desire as all Americans to share in the splendors of wealth and high places generally, yet he felt he had little chance to realize this dream."⁶ Life, with its contrasts and disappointments, with its shortcomings and enticements, was always prodding Dreiser; and more and more he came to feel that life was a siren force, brutal, subtle, charming and selfish.

To the effect of the conditions of Dreiser's personal life and of the spirit of the times upon him is linked another force. That is the literature which he had read. As a result of the influence of the ideas

⁴M. W. Flinn, The Origins of the Industrial Revolution (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1966), p. 4.

⁵Richard Lehan, Theodore Dreiser: His World and His Novels, pp. 4-5.

⁶Theodore Dreiser, A Book About Myself, p. 370.

Dreiser gained from books, he defied conventional morality and allied himself with the naturalists, who were attacking the canons of a more genteel tradition and addressing themselves to new social problems. Dreiser's naturalism derived from a mechanistic concept of life that sees man as the victim of instincts, social forces, economics, and change. According to Dreiser, man is a mere mechanism, not to be held responsible for his behavior because he is driven by vast inner and outer compulsions over which he has no control. His philosophy was strongly influenced by the naturalistic philosophy of Herbert Spencer, who had popularized Darwin's theory of evolution and applied the biological laws of survival to life in the anonymous streets of the city. Dreiser mentions Spencer's ideas in Sister Carrie.⁷

Dreiser was also influenced by other authors whom he read, including "philosophers such as Darwin, Huxley, ..., and other interpreters of science."⁸ He became acquainted with Balzac and Zola at about the same time that he became deeply interested in Huxley and Spencer. He was profoundly influenced by ideas from imaginative literature; for example, literature "of such writers as William Dean Howells, Charles Warner, George W. Cable, Thomas Nelson Page, and many others who wrote of nobility of character, the greatness of ideals, and the joy of simple things."⁹ Ideas obtained from the books he read

⁷Theodore Dreiser, Sister Carrie (New York: New American Library, Inc., 1900), p. 90. All subsequent quotations from this text will be cited from this edition, unless otherwise noted.

⁸Ernestine Campbell, "Dreiser as a Critic of American Political and Economic Life" (Master's thesis, Atlanta University, 1947), p. 14.

⁹Ibid., p. 18.

became the basis for much in Dreiser's novels, including Sister Carrie, which is often pitiless in its picturization of the degradation of human life and human values and is permeated with Dreiser's naturalistic philosophy.

Dreiser thus derived the pessimistic philosophy that had such tremendous effect upon him as a man and writer from three general sources: from the conditions of his personal life, from his environment and, especially, from his reading in the natural sciences. All three forces had their part in shaping his attitude toward life and toward its reflection as a writer. In short, they effectively helped in shaping Dreiser.

Influenced by these forces, Dreiser produced his first novel, based on the life of one of his sisters and retelling the timeless story of an innocent young girl who goes to the city and there loses her virtue. The novel was judged obscene by some of its readers, chiefly because Carrie is unpunished for her transgressions and feels no guilt for her conduct.¹⁰ At the conclusion of the novel she is alone and lonely, but these, Dreiser seems to urge, are the condition of the world, particularly of the big city, and not the wages of sin.

"What is the historical background of Sister Carrie?", one may ask. "Scholars have noted that Dreiser drew loosely upon the experiences of his sister Emma and her lover, L. A. Hopkins, for his account of Carrie and Hurstwood in Chicago."¹¹ It is very clear, however, that in

¹⁰Donald Pizer, The Novels of Theodore Dreiser: A Critical Study (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1976), p. 51.

¹¹Ibid., p. 31.

addition to autobiography, Dreiser also drew upon his acute awareness of the burgeoning America of his time. He had come to believe that society, not its people individually, was corrupt, and hence he uses the theme of hypocrisy in some of his novels, including Sister Carrie.

In short, it is the theme of hypocrisy--the false front, the appearance of virtue and the practice of ruthless realities--which he undertook to expose in such writings as Sister Carrie.¹²

Throughout his nomadic childhood, Dreiser moved constantly in a circle of people who cared little for social or moral restraints, and that reality tended to create within him an impression that all moral controls and conventions are futile. Moreover, his father's stern religious intolerance caused Dreiser to become antagonistic toward all religious beliefs. In addition, Dreiser himself has written that his experiences as a newspaperman and his recognition of the wide gap between the rich and the poor and the main vices of society aided in the development of his pessimistic view of life. Furthermore, he grew up in the ultra-practical society which he depicts in his novels. Many critics feel that he merely made explicit the view of life which he found implicit in American society. Later in life, his discovery of the Victorian popularizers of scientific thought and the French naturalists convinced him that man is a mechanism ruled by indifferent, haphazard and bitterly cruel forces over which he has no control.¹³

¹²Charlotte A. Alexander, Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie, pp. 7-8.

¹³Richard Lehan, Theodore Dreiser: His World and His Novels, pp. 52-53.

Part of Sister Carrie reflects events from Dreiser's own turbulent life. In 1886, L. A. Hopkins, a clerk in a Chicago saloon, took \$3,500 from his employers, and with Emma Dreiser, one of the author's sisters, fled to New York. Dreiser modeled Carrie after Emma and used Hopkins for aspects of Hurstwood's personality. By the time the novel was finished in 1900, however, he had gone far beyond the sordid story of adultery and theft and had created a work which presented complex questions of innocence and guilt.¹⁴

Various themes are discussed in Sister Carrie, including urban life, class conflict, sex, money as a survival instrument and as lure and tool of power in America, success based on materialism, the individual against universal forces, the purposelessness of life, American political and economic life, the influence of environment in shaping human life and actions and, finally, morality in American society.

In Sister Carrie Dreiser portrays urban life through his pictures of New York and Chicago. In these cities all the effects of the industrial revolution are seen.

Carrie Meeber, the heroine and protagonist of Sister Carrie, leaves her rural area for the great city of Chicago, where she is going to live with her sister and find work. "In 1889 Chicago had the peculiar qualifications of growth which made such adventuresome pilgrimages even on the part of young girls plausible." (p. 19) Carrie saw Chicago as full of railroad yards, factories and vast offices. She could think of

¹⁴Richard Lehan, Theodore Dreiser: His World and His Novels, pp. 57-58.

people connected with the city only as those counting money, dressing magnificently and riding in carriages. Dreiser predicts that Carrie may either lose her innocence or fall into saving hands as a result of her coming to the big city. (p. 7)

While on the train on her way to Chicago, Carrie met Drouet, a genial, flashy traveling salesman. Before the train pulled into the station they had exchanged addresses and Drouet had promised to call on Carrie at her sister's flat. Carrie discovered that in her sister's home her life would be far from the happy, carefree existence of which she had dreamed. The Hansons (i.e., Mrs. Minnie Hanson, her sister, and Mr. Sven Hanson, her brother-in-law) were hard-working people, grim and penny-pinching, allowing themselves no pleasures and living a dull, conventional life. It was clear that Drouet could not possibly call there, not only because of the unattractive atmosphere but also because the Hansons were sure to object to him. Carrie wrote Drouet that he was not to call and that she would get in touch with him later.

Meanwhile, Carrie finally found work in a small shoe factory. Of her first wages, all but fifty cents went to her sister and brother-in-law. Then she fell ill and lost her job. It seemed that she would have to go back to Wisconsin, and the Hansons encouraged her to do so, if she could not find a job.

A similar situation occurs in New York. Later in the novel, under the name of Wheeler, Hurstwood (Carrie's second, and more cultured and affluent, lover) and Carrie were married, Carrie believing all the while that the ceremony was legal. Then they left for New York, where Hurstwood looked for work, but with no success. Finally, he bought a partnership in a small tavern, but when it was dissolved he lost most of

his money. When Hurstwood unsuccessfully sought work, he grew less eager for a job and began staying at home all day. When bills piled up, he and Carrie moved to a new apartment to escape their creditors. Dreiser here again shows the indispensability of a job and money in the city.

Carrie also finds that urban life is characterized by unfriendliness. For example, her "sister and her brother-in-law were very cold to her." (p. 15) In New York, it is rare for Carrie and Hurstwood to find congenial people to socialize with, and when they do, some can be very bad company. Hurstwood says, "You never know who you're going to get in with. Some of these people are pretty bad company." (p. 285)

Dreiser also sees certain urban areas as places of fame and wealth, with people dressed in fine clothes and fashionable styles (p. 27). Thus, the city offered many things which Carrie longed for and which she thought she could obtain by getting a job. As she said: "Surely Chicago was not so bad if she could find a place in one day. She might find another and better later." (p. 29) A job for Carrie means a promise of hope, happiness and life in the future. Dreiser shows the bright sides of the cities as well as the slums, but, for the most part, his characters are disillusioned by them. The big city did not necessarily hold promises for the poor.

Class conflict in American society is revealed in Sister Carrie. The critic, Walter Fuller Taylor, asserts that by 1900 there were three main classes of people in the United States, namely "the wealthy class

at the top of the ladder, followed by the middle class and, finally, the proletariat."¹⁵ As Harold Ruggs, a social critic and historian, puts it: "Inevitably, with the industrialization of the country, class consciousness among Americans became more acute. The leisure class of America was developing. In 1861 there were only three millionaires. By 1900 there were 3,800."¹⁶

The idea of class is reflected in Sister Carrie. When the novel opens Carrie belongs to the middle class, a class to which Dreiser himself belonged by the time he wrote the novel. Carrie's home background was "of the lower middle class; her father was a worker in a flour mill; she had gone to the big city of Chicago with pitifully few clothes, not warm enough to face the winter." (p. 7) Carrie also had a limited education. "She was a fair example of the middle American class--two generations removed from the emigrant. Books were beyond her interest--knowledge a sealed book." (p. 8) Drouet delivers Carrie. He offers her money for clothes she needs. She does not know how to explain the source of the money to her sister; Drouet solves the problem by suggesting that he rent a room for her. A few days later, Carrie goes to live with Drouet. His charms are irresistible, and, though he stresses that no strings are attached to his kindness, Carrie cannot really help becoming his mistress, as much out of gratitude as owing to any other consideration. She is introduced as Mrs. Drouet, though on

¹⁵Walter Fuller Taylor, A History of American Letters (New York: American Book Co., 1936), p. 248.

¹⁶Harold Ruggs, A History of American Government and Culture (New York: Ginn and Co., Inc., 1931), p. 511.

the subject of making this a fact he is evasive. Carrie later abandons Drouet for Hurstwood while still in Chicago. She recognizes not only that Hurstwood is the superior man, but also that he looks upon her with more than companionable affection. After some time of courtship, Carrie and Hurstwood board the Detroit train to Montreal, where they are married illegally, under the name of Wheeler, "by a Baptist minister, the first divine they found convenient." (p. 269) Then the newlyweds board the New York train and arrive the next morning. Hurstwood, as had Drouet, helps Carrie to climb her financial and career ladder. Rising from poverty to membership in a stage chorus, Carrie leaves Hurstwood in order to room with a girl who has been dancing in the same chorus. Inexorably, Hurstwood goes down and down to poverty, destitution, begging, starvation and, finally, suicide. Carrie, on the other hand, rises rapidly from the moment she leaves Hurstwood.

She graduates from the chorus to a minor role. Later Carrie climbs rapidly until she earns what was to her an unheard-of salary, lives in one of the finest hotels in the city and receives countless proposals and attentions from men as far superior to Hurstwood at his best as he had been to the flashy Drouet.

George Hurstwood represents the great American upper-middle class. At Rector's (in Chicago) Drouet had met him as manager of Fitzgerald and Moy's. He had been pointed out as a very shrewd, successful and well-known man about town. Hurstwood looked the part, for, besides being slightly under forty, he had a good, stout constitution, an active manner, and a solid, substantial air, which was achieved in part by his fine clothes, his clean linen, his jewels and, above all, his own sense of his importance. (p. 45) Hurstwood was

incisive and clever on practical matters, and he was capable of creating a good impression. "His managerial position was fairly important--a kind of stewardship which was imposing, but lacked financial control." (pp. 45-46)

Hurstwood was class-conscious. That can be seen in the way he greeted poor people, which was different from the way he greeted the rich. The way he saluted the poor made them "become aware of his class position." (p. 46) However, he addressed the very rich with friendliness, "paying them the deference which could win their good feeling without in the least compromising his own bearing and opinions." (p. 46)

Hurstwood's family is rich, consisting of Julia Hurstwood, his wife, who is a jealous and self-centered woman; Jessica Hurstwood, the Hurstwoods' snobbish, supercilious daughter; and, finally, George Hurstwood, Jr., the Hurstwoods' son, who is both independent and self-important. The family is also characterized by social snobbery. The snobbery of the upper class in Sister Carrie is oppressive of the lower classes. Dreiser alludes to this when he comments about "the snobbery of some Chicagoans." (p. 20)

The Hurstwood children represent social snobbery. Jessica "had developed a certain amount of reserve and independence which was not inviting to the richest form of parental devotion. She was in the high school, and had notions of life which were decidedly those of a patrician. She liked nice clothes and urged for them constantly." (p. 83) Dreiser says that Jessica was interested only in girls whose parents were rich and whose fathers were owners or part-owners of businesses. Mrs. Hurstwood has the same attitude about social position

as Jessica. In a conversation about a school play, the mother and daughter make the following remarks: "'They've got that Martha Griswold in it again--she thinks she can act.' 'Her family doesn't amount to anything, does it?' said Mrs. Hurstwood sympathetically. 'They haven't anything, have they?' 'No,' returned Jessica, 'they're poor as church mice.'" (p. 85) In Sister Carrie, Dreiser shows that snobbishness became a way of life in twentieth-century American society. The snobbishness of the upper classes showed the lower classes their unimportance as members of society. George Hurstwood serves a valuable social function in the novel. His position as the manager of a prosperous saloon is life for him and gives rise to his character. He is a forty-year-old man married to a woman who is arrogantly class-conscious and the father of two snobbish children. The entire Hurstwood family is portrayed as obsessed with wealth, status and class-consciousness.

Dreiser does not portray only the American upper class. He also presents the poorer class. These include "the Hanson family." (p. 16) They led a dull life. For example, after work, when Minnie's husband came home, he "had a pair of yellow carpet slippers which he enjoyed wearing, and this he would immediately substitute for his solid pair of shoes. This, and washing his face with the aid of common washing soap until it glowed a shiny red, constituted his only preparation for his evening meal." (p. 33) The Hansons are not ready to spend money casually: "'She (Carrie) oughtn't to be thinking about spending her money on theaters already, do you think?' he said" (p. 35). Dreiser also presents yet another poor class of Americans in Chicago (p. 45) who are miserable, for they do not have food and other necessities of

life. Of course, Dreiser here is not referring to the Hansons, but to a large group whose resources are notably less than theirs. Dreiser later refers to a similar group, the factory employees besides whom Carrie labors when first in Chicago.

Dreiser also explores sex in twentieth-century American society. In Sister Carrie sexual affairs between Carrie and Drouet and then between Carrie and Hurstwood are shown. In the relationship with Drouet she becomes his mistress. Her financial status leads her to accept Drouet as her friend and to acceptance of his charity. She likes, but does not love, him; there is no question that he is very kind to her. Dreiser considers neither Carrie nor Drouet to be evil, nor does he blame her for her actions or her affair with Drouet. Dreiser explains that the influence of environment shapes human life and human actions such as those of Carrie.

Eventually, Carrie abandons Drouet and has another affair, with Hurstwood. Hurstwood's deception of her and her easy acceptance of it are defended by Dreiser, who says that she would not have submitted if she had not been promised marriage. To free her from a conventional judgment, Dreiser criticizes America's judgment of woman, asserting: "In the light of the world's attitude toward woman and her duties, the nature of Carrie's mental state deserves consideration." (p. 90)

Morality during the early twentieth century seemed to have carried sexual connotations. By many people sex was regarded as sinful, and such words as "virtue" and "purity" also carried sexual connotations. As one author points out:

Perhaps conventional moral standards in twentieth-century American society can best be described in terms of its expectations for the female figure. The unmarried woman was identified by her virtues, her chastity and her honesty. If

she allowed herself to lose her chastity she was regarded a 'fallen woman.' By the same token, a married woman was expected to maintain her marital fidelity.¹⁷

Thus, according to the moral standards of her contemporary society, Carrie violated sexual rules both by being mistress to Drouet and by being illegitimately married to Hurstwood. Despite her violation of sexual taboos, Dreiser nevertheless does not hold her morally responsible for her actions; according to him they "are justified." (p. 463)

Nor does Dreiser censure Drouet, who continues to be a promiscuous seducer, but who, according to the author, is no villain. Dreiser feels that man's tendency toward good is equal to his tendency toward evil, but that his instincts are stronger and more compelling than his knowledge of right. Carrie is not punished by society; her actions seem to be of no ethical significance, for she becomes a successful actress in spite of her defiance of sexual conventions. In the words of Maxwell Geismar, a literary historian and critic, Carrie was

an immoral woman who was never basically immoral, a heroine who created a storm of sexual controversy, but was not directly sexual; a fallen woman who rose in the world because she had not realized the extent of her fall.¹⁸

Dreiser indicates constantly that sex is an instinct which plays a major role in human life.

Dreiser views money as a survival instrument, a lure and a tool of power in America. He suggests that "the true meaning of money yet

¹⁷Ernestine Steiner, "Theodore Dreiser's Attitudes Toward Morality and American Society in Five Major Novels" (Master's thesis, Atlanta University, May 1974), p. 21.

¹⁸Maxwell Geismar, Rebels and Ancestors: The American Novel, 1890-1915 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Riverside Press, 1953), p. 295.

remains to be popularly explained and comprehended." (p. 63) He says of money:

When each individual realizes for himself that this thing (money) primarily stands for and should only be accepted as a moral due--that it should be paid out as honestly stored energy, and not as an usurped privilege--many of our social, religious and political troubles will have permanently passed. (p. 62)

He also says of money, "If Carrie were to be cast away upon a desert island with a bundle of money, only the long strain of starvation would have taught her that in some cases it could have no value." (p. 63) The critic Walter Benn Michaels asserts that these two perceptions of the significance of money are similar, but not entirely compatible.

Examining one of the two, Michaels questions:

Why, for example, does Dreiser think that the recognition of the 'true meaning of money as honestly stored energy' would put an end to social and political troubles? The answer seems to be that he is here embracing the labor theory of what the economist, David Ricardo, called 'real value,' a theory which, at least since Marx, has been one of the cornerstones of socialist economics. Money, in other words, is the symbol of labor; labor is the determinant of value.¹⁹

As far as Carrie is concerned, she is well off with money,

'Money: something everybody else has and I must get' would have expressed her understanding of it thoroughly. Some of it she now held in her hand--two soft, green ten-dollar bills--and she felt that she was immensely better off for the having of them. Now she would buy a nice new jacket! Now she would buy a nice pair of pretty button shoes. She would get stockings, too, and a skirt. (p. 63)

She felt reassured when she got the money: "The twenty dollars seemed a wonderful and delightful thing. Ah, money, money, money! What a thing

¹⁹Walter Benn Michaels, "Sister Carrie's Popular Economy," Critical Inquiry 7(Winter 1980):373.

it was to have. How plenty of it would clear away all these troubles."
(p. 67)

Dreiser explains that it was by the merest chance that Hurstwood found his employer's safe open on the very night on which he had planned to disappear with Carrie. His theft of \$10,000 resulted from a nervous impulse which he was too weak to resist. He was later motivated to return most of the money, but he never recovered his self-esteem.

Dreiser also discusses the advantages and disadvantages of money. Where there is no money there are bound to be both marital problems and personal unhappiness. For example, a financial crisis led to tensions and separate bedrooms for Carrie and her husband. (p. 331) On the other hand, when Hurstwood momentarily became richer he began to ignore Carrie. She became suspicious of his indifference. Although she did not care for his comradeship, she did not want him to ignore her. Similarly, when Carrie becomes successful and famous in the theater she abandons Hurstwood. Thus Dreiser sees money as a survival instrument, lure and tool of power in America, and also examines the problems both of having and of not having money.

Dreiser discusses the idea of success based on materialism. Although, as the book opens, Carrie is poverty-stricken and uneducated, she is high in self-interest. From the beginning she is strongly motivated by longings for security, wealth and pleasure, yearnings not spiritual, but material. Carrie's eventual break with Hurstwood marks the beginning of her successful career on the New York stage. Her rise financially marks a qualitative change from her earlier life; she becomes self-supporting and able to afford the kind of life of which she has always dreamed. Her material success is based on a good job with a

good salary. (p. 420) Her material success opens doors for her to most of the fine places in the city.

Hurstwood's success is also based on materialism. His position as the manager of a prosperous saloon is life for him and gives rise to his character. He was shrewd and clever in many little things, and capable of creating a good impression. "His managerial position was fairly important." (p. 45) To Carrie, he seems several cuts above Drouet; indeed he is to her a veritable aristocrat, and she is drawn to him almost as strongly as he to her, though less for himself than for the life of ease he represents. His charm and persuasiveness are so great, however, and the magic world in which he seems to move has such an aura for her, that she is able to convince herself that what she feels for him is love. Nevertheless, when Hurstwood loses his money, she abandons him.

Some critics feel that in this novel Dreiser attacks the materialism of America in the 1900's. One such critic is Charlotte Alexander, who asserts: "Dreiser looked upon American society of the 1900's as so unstably concentrated upon money values that it was not surprising for it to produce insecure, indecisive people."²⁰

Dreiser articulates yet another theme, the individual against universal forces, that is based on the philosophy of determinism. Sister Carrie is naturalistic, that is, based upon a literary concept which is more inclusive and less selective than realism, and which holds to the philosophy of determinism. It conceives of man as being

²⁰Charlotte A. Alexander, Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie, p. 75.

controlled by his instincts and passions, or by his social and economic environment and circumstances. Since, in this view, man has no free will, the naturalistic writer does not attempt to make moral judgments, and as a determinist he tends towards pessimism. Basing Sister Carrie on this philosophy, Dreiser believes that man is a mere mechanism. As Carolyn Frazier Blakely writes:

Conventional moral codes, therefore, are not based upon reality; they lose their sanction as a basis for conduct. He (Dreiser) believes that man is only a chemical compound, ignorant and futile amid a web of natural forces which are both good and evil. Because his conduct is a thing for which man cannot be held responsible or blamed, and since nature itself frowns upon every human effort to confine it in moral harness, conventions are folly.²¹

Dreiser created Carrie Meeber as a crude young girl representing the downtrodden, those who have no money, no background, no sophistication and no recognized special talent. When she went to the city, she began to emulate city life. As Carrie advanced financially and socially over the miserable narrowness that characterized the home life of her sister, she began to recognize class differences, to long for better things, even to sense that Drouet did not belong among the sophisticated and the cultured. "She really was not enamoured of Drouet. She was more clever than he. In a dim way, she was beginning to see where he lacked."

(p. 108) Drouet's friend Hurstwood represented the next higher level of poise, wealth and understanding. When he met Carrie he fell desperately in love with her. While his later disintegration and suicide were inevitable, his downfall is not attributed to sin, but to

²¹Carolyn Frazier Blakely, "Naturalism in the Novels of Theodore Dreiser" (Master's thesis, Atlanta University, 1964), p. 1.

society, with its oppressive morality and barbaric economy. In the same way, Charles Drouet is presented as a vain young man whose first essential concern is "fashionable clothes and his second a recurrent desire for women." (p. 10) Dreiser explains that Drouet's pursuit of women was not harmful and that he made advances because of an inborn desire, not because he was a "cold-blooded, dark, scheming villain. To her, and indeed to all the world, he was a nice, good-hearted man. There was nothing evil in the fellow." (p. 64)

Thus Dreiser looked upon human beings as caught up in both internal and external struggles which were nevertheless interrelated. As Alexander says: "His young protagonists, so often born poor, are driven both by natural instinct and by the glittering external circumstances of American affluence."²² Many critics, therefore, see Carrie not only as an individual and as a fictional study of Dreiser's sisters, but also as a universal character, as universally human in her striving as any other woman in her circumstances.

Dreiser also develops the theme of the purposelessness of life which results from unhappiness in life. For example, Carrie rises from a poverty-stricken life to that of a successful and popular actress, and yet she is not happy. In the last paragraph of the novel Dreiser tells the reader what Carrie's fate, ironically, will be.

Know, then, that for you is neither surfeit nor content. In your rocking chair, by your window dreaming, shall you long, alone. In your rocking chair, by your window, shall you dream such happiness as you may never feel. (p. 465)

²²Ibid., p. 72.

Carrie "had learned that in this world, as in her own present state, was not happiness." (p.464) Similarly, Hurstwood, who started out well financially, is not content with life. He ended up badly, in poverty, and, finally, by committing suicide.

Dreiser also critically examines American politico-economic life. This examination has proved to be one of America's most significant treatments of the period from 1870 to 1900 found in fiction. That it is true and honest has been confirmed by many critics.

For example, Dreiser presents in Sister Carrie a scene at a street railway strike. There had been general dissatisfaction as to the hours of labor required for motormen and to the wages paid them. As a result, the workers had gone on strike. Ernestine Campbell asserts that at the time Sister Carrie was written America was undergoing "political and economic"²³ injustices and inequities. For example, the employees worked excessively long hours and were paid only meager wages, indicating the then-poor economy and oppressive political situation.

Sister Carrie demonstrates the fact that for the laboring class the economic and political life of America was in a sad state. Donald Pizer states:

Through the Brooklyn streetcar strike Dreiser illustrates his ability to combine the personal and the documentary into an effective fictional reality. Strikes by public transportation workers were common in the 1890's. Thus, details of geography and weather of the Brooklyn strike, the exact nature of the striker's demands, and the mood and actions of the mob, all combined with Dreiser's renewed, and, no doubt, interpreted memory of the Toledo car ride and strike atmosphere to create

²³Campbell, "Dreiser as a Critic," pp. 44-45.

one of the best portrayals of industrial violence in American fiction to that time.²⁴

Dreiser treats another theme, that is, the influence of environment in shaping human life and actions. With innate understanding of the strong American accent upon wealth, he shows how the character of the individual is affected by his environment. In Chicago, Carrie Meeber is in an environment which values pleasure, money and clothes. Her poverty leads to her acceptance of money and other charity offers from Drouet and to eventually becoming his mistress.²⁵

Having thus discussed the themes of Sister Carrie, one may proceed to consider its techniques. Characterization is one of the powerful techniques through which Dreiser presents his message. Characterization is one of the vital distinguishing qualities of the Dreiserian novel. Dreiser's characters become victims of their conditions; they writhe and suffer to win a foothold in the social world, to shake off the shackles that bind them to conventional codes of conduct; they exhaust themselves to gain success and destroy themselves in acts of impulsive deviation. The most arresting characteristic is that the Dreiser character acts on his own desires.²⁶

Carrie Meeber is referred to as "Sister" Carrie, a term which suggests both her ignorance and her innocence--and, most important, her instincts--as she confronts the metropolis and her destiny there. In the Carrie we see at the end of the novel the ignorance and the

²⁴Pizer, The Novels of Theodore Dreiser, pp. 39-40.

²⁵Steiner, "Theodore Dreiser's Attitude," p. 60.

²⁶Ibid.

innocence have been replaced, for the most part, by experience, some of it awakening experience. "But it is instinct--chiefly represented by Dreiser as desire and as Carrie's emotional potential--that really governs her actions."²⁷ Carrie is frequently quite energetic and quietly resolute. She is not capable of being mean or vicious. For example, on the occasion of her ultimate desertion of the sinking Hurstwood, as she reflects on what both he and Drouet had done for her, she feels guilty because she hates to treat badly anyone who has been good to her. She is the result of Dreiser's desire to portray "life as it is," sympathetically showing imperfect humanity in an uncertain world.

The meaning of money for Carrie is described purely in terms of its material significance. Her first gesture toward her destiny--the acceptance of twenty dollars from Drouet--is motivated by her desire to escape from the drudgery and drabness of the Hansons' life, to move "up." She seems to contain more potential passion than the two men with whom she is linked. The author refers to this sometimes as "spirit," sometimes as "imagination," and sometimes as "emotional greatness." Dreiser suggests the latter when he says that Hurstwood did not understand the nature of emotional greatness.²⁸ Nonetheless, it is the instinctual quality of expressing emotions that makes Carrie's first chance theatrical venture a success and leads her later to a limited theatrical acclaim. One is thus led to conclude that there is

²⁷Alexander, Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie, p. 61.

²⁸Ibid.

unconscious emotional greatness in Carrie, which importantly expresses, as Dreiser tells us through Robert Ames (a cousin of her friend Mrs. Vance; a studious young man whose serious view of life gives Carrie cause to question her own values), the universal longings of mankind. When Carrie, upon her first meeting with Ames, feels the pain of not understanding something, it is but a preview of her final state, when, rocking and dreaming, we leave her as the "representation" of the world's discontent--the world which can feel, can pursue, but cannot reason, chiefly because circumstances have kept it below the level of the reasoning mind. Carrie might dream of the next stage upward, but free will and reason were too feeble in her to permit her to imagine what true happiness might be and so make her way consciously toward it.

The next character to be analyzed is Drouet. Drouet is of a class which was arising because of the giant expansion of industry. He is a "drummer," a traveling salesman. He is also a "masher," one whose dress or manners are calculated to elicit the admiration of susceptible young women. We see Drouet as somewhat vain and superficial, and it is this very egotism which prevents him from being sensitive enough to the changing Carrie; he believes that her early brooding and depression spring from her loneliness for him, as she awaits his return from traveling. But one also sympathizes with him as a good-hearted, spontaneous person, caught permanently in the circumstances which placed material gain and pleasure above all else in the American society of the 1900's. Drouet is as nonreflective as Carrie, or more so, and less calculating than Hurstwood, but he is ready with a genuine offer of help to Carrie, for it is instinct and circumstances that inevitably draw

them into alliance later. He is not a tragic figure. When Drouet meets Carrie again at the end of the novel, he has not changed; our last glimpse of him, after Carrie's rejection of him, finds him pursuing his usual pleasure--putting on a good appearance and going after some fine-stepping girls.

Hurstwood, although of the highest social class of which Dreiser writes, is just as much buffeted by circumstance and environment as are the other characters. When we first meet him in Chicago, he is very much a part of his milieu of physical comfort, solid respectability, professional success and social interchange with the great and near-great. Hurstwood is secure, shrewd and cautious. However, with a coldly malicious and selfish wife and their grasping children, when he meets Carrie he is powerfully drawn to her youth and beauty. From this meeting and a growing relationship, he moves to the very center and peak of his existence in the novel, that is, to the sheer accident of his theft from his employers, with its irrevocable power over his future destiny. Thus it is through Hurstwood most of all that Dreiser makes his point about the amassed force of a materialistic society against the faltering, unaware individual, who is ill-equipped by nature or by environment to reason or to reflect upon his state and upon the consequences of his actions. Deprived of his comfortable, secure milieu when he comes to New York, Hurstwood takes a short step to the apathy which forces him gradually down to the Bowery and to his death.²⁹

²⁹Yoshinobu Hakutani, "Sister Carrie and the Problem of Literary Naturalism," Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal 13(April 1967):8-9.

Mrs. Hurstwood "was a cold, self-centered woman who was secretly somewhat pleased by the fact that much of her husband's property was in her name." (p. 109) In her actions and pronouncements, Mrs. Hurstwood represents the upper part of the society to which she belongs. She is a moral hypocrite, eager to set adrift and forget anyone who does not conform to her narrow standards. Her values are only those of wealth, social status and appearance. She perceives that she can more effectively realize her social aims without her husband, provided she retains his material wealth. At the novel's end we see that she has indeed calculated "something better" for her daughter, who has married prestigiously and is off to Europe.³⁰

Jessica and George Hurstwood, children of the Hurstwoods, are the inevitable generation which would spring from the union of two such materialists as their parents. Theirs has not been the "lovely home atmosphere" which Dreiser insists is necessary to "make strong and just the natures cradled and nourished within it." These two young people, as adults, are self-centered, indifferent, unloving creatures, completely motivated by what money can get for them. They are the generation that will cling tenaciously to its "ingroupism" and will ruthlessly exclude all outsiders.³¹

The Hansons are at the lower levels of social status. Carrie's brother-in-law's way "up" is obviously to "save." "He was of a clean, saving disposition, and had already paid a number of monthly installments on two lots far out on the west side. His ambition was some day

³⁰Ibid., pp. 9-10.

³¹Ibid., pp. 11-12.

to build a house on them." (pp. 16-17) But his way, necessarily, is to be one of drudgery, plodding, self-denial--that "dull round of days" without pleasure or even much thought of pleasure. And Carrie perceives early in her short stay with them that her sister, Minnie, has taken on her husband's view of life. "She was now a thin, though rugged, woman of twenty-seven, with ideas of life colored by her husband's and fast hardening into narrower conceptions of pleasure and duty than had ever been hers in a thoroughly circumscribed youth." (p. 19) The Hansons set their sights much lower than the Hurstwoods, but their motivation is exactly the same, that is, to increase their material well-being.³²

Another character is Lola Osborne. She is Carrie's theatrical friend, a girl who takes life easily, always seeking a little better for herself, but completely unreflecting, without the depressions that beset Carrie. She is not destined for greatness in the theater, and she good-naturedly praises, encourages and really likes her young friend. She, like Drouet, will be able to go merrily on her way through life undisturbed by intimations of intellect, reason or soul. Dreiser presents Lola as inherently coarser than Carrie, a better illustration of the Darwinian struggle for survival in a complex, harsh society of unfulfilled ambitions.³³

The Vances, yet another couple in Sister Carrie, represent another "level" of the American society. Their class is below that of the Hurstwoods, yet they manage to live well. They are always seen in the

³²Ibid., p. 12.

³³Ibid., pp. 14-15.

pursuit of pleasure, whether of appearance, gastronomy, or "art." It is, no doubt deliberately, withheld from the reader what the actual source of their income is. They represent that class which would mushroom in the succeeding decades as one which probably "lives beyond its means" but, with luck, eludes bankruptcy. Like Lola, the Vances are consistently vulgar, but in a different context. The Vances are noted for their basic materialism and intellectual stagnation, qualities which separate them permanently from Robert Ames and which insure that Mrs. Vance will be interested in resuming her association with Carrie only after she has become a limited, predictable success in the theater and is free of Hurstwood's decay and oncoming doom, soon to be completed. Mrs. Vance sets Carrie's standards of taste in New York. She leads Carrie to discover a host of detailed refinements concerning dress and demeanor that augment a women's charm. Mrs. Vance coaches Carrie further, making her able to continue without Hurstwood.³⁴

Robert Ames, as the indubitable intellectual, is "outside" the propelling forces of materialism in the novel. Apparently Dreiser was working out through Ames his own ideas on art and beauty. Later, Ames suggests the idea of "choice" to Carrie in describing to her what her artistic potential is. He urges her to alter her repertoire to include more serious drama:

I should say, turn to the dramatic field. You have so much sympathy and such a melodious voice. Make them valuable to others. It will make your powers endure... 'What do you mean?' she (Carrie) asked. Why, just this. You have this quality in your eyes and mouth, and in your nature. You can lose it, you know. If you turn away from it and live to satisfy yourself

³⁴Ibid., pp. 15-16.

alone, it will go fast enough. The look will leave your eyes. Your mouth will change, your power to act will disappear. You may think they won't, but they will. Nature takes care of that. If I were you, he said, I'd change. (pp. 448-49)

At the same time, in persuading Carrie that she has a face in which people can perceive their own yearnings and discontent, he is also speaking for Dreiser on art.³⁵ Art itself plays back to the people their universal longings. (p. 448)

Thus, through characterization, Dreiser succeeds in treating his various themes emerging from twentieth-century American society.

Plot, or the organization of incidents, is a vital technique in Dreiser. To describe the plot of Sister Carrie appears to be an exercise in stating the obvious, namely that Carrie rises as Hurstwood falls. However, the total plot rests on many smaller units, and it is from this solid support that the overall form of the novel acquires substance and power. Carrie's rise is in part plotted on the hierarchial positions of Drouet and Hurstwood; besides, the distinctive social realities of New York and Chicago play significant roles in the shaping of the fate of Carrie and Hurstwood. As one critic asserts: "Thus, three major intertwined structural strands are usually present at any one moment in the novel. Carrie's rise in relation to Hurstwood's fall, Chicago events in relation to New York events, and Carrie's association with one of the three men in her life in relation to the other two."³⁶

³⁵Pizer, The Novels of Theodore Dreiser, pp. 63-64.

³⁶Ibid., p. 82.

Dreiser also employs the third-person narrator to reveal the feelings and ideas of the characters portrayed. Thus the narrator tells the reader about Carrie, what she is like, rather than letting the protagonist herself reveal herself through what she says and does. As Pizer comments, "For many readers, the most significant aspect of Dreiser's fictional technique is his distinctive 'voice' as a narrator."³⁷

Dialogue is another important technique utilized by Dreiser. Although Dreiser acts both as the authorial voice and third-person narrator, sometimes he uses dialogue so that we can hear from the characters themselves, learning how they feel or what they want. For example, when Carrie goes to seek a job, she speaks to the manager herself:

'What can I do for you, miss?' he inquired, surveying her curiously. 'I want to know if I can get a position,' she inquired. 'As what?' he asked. 'Not as anything in particular,' she faltered. 'Have you ever had any experience in the wholesale dry goods business?' he questioned. 'No, sir.' 'Well we haven't anything here,' he said. 'We employ only experienced help.' (p. 25)

The effect of dialogue such as this is that, as it imitates ordinary speech or actual conversation of characters, it gives readers first-hand information instead of reported content composed by the author.

Diction, or the choice and arrangement of words in a literary work, is also effectively used in Sister Carrie. Dreiser arranges his words in such a way that the readers can distinguish the thoughts and response of his characters as well as his own. For example, when Dreiser

³⁷Ibid., p. 84.

comments in his own voice about "the peculiar little tan jacket with large mother-of-pearl buttons which was all the rage that fall," (p. 68) or "This was really a gorgeous saloon from a Chicago standpoint," (p. 45) or notes that the jacket "had given her a distinct idea of the gorgeousness and luxury of this wonderful temple of gastronomy," (p. 297) he does so in the context of a character's response to the jacket, saloon and restaurant. The word-order in the above cited examples is perfectly suited to describe the respective subjects. Commenting on diction in Sister Carrie, Pizer says that it is hackneyed and clichéd. "His hackneyed and clichéd diction (such as the one in the above cited example) occurs frequently when he is not engaged in a form of indirect discourse. Dreiser's technique of tonality accounts for his clichéd diction."³⁸ Pizer goes on to say that "it is thus undeniable that Dreiser's clichéd and hackneyed diction is a flaw in his fiction."³⁹

Syntax, which refers to sentence structure, that is, variously the arrangement of words into phrases, clauses and sentences, is used with lack of sophistication in Sister Carrie. Some writers comment negatively on Dreiser's style in Sister Carrie, including syntax. For example:

His style is atrocious, his sentences are chaotic, his grammar and syntax faulty; he has no feelings for words, no sense of diction. His wordiness and repetitions are unbearable, his cacophonies incredible.⁴⁰

³⁸Ibid., p. 90.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Thomas K. Whipple, "Aspects of a Pathfinder," The Stature of Theodore Dreiser, Alfred Kazin and Charles Shapiro, eds. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1965), p. 96.

Regardless of Whipple's assertion of the novel's faulty syntax, one feels that Dreiser's frequently pointed sentences in Sister Carrie lead the reader to understand his message with ease. His usage of "standard" grammar is direct, clear and to the point. Sometimes Dreiser compresses many realities into one sentence, for example: "A good dinner, the company of a young woman and an evening at the theater were the chief things for him." (p. 458)

Dreiser presents his ideas through many symbolic images, the most important of which in Sister Carrie are the city, the sea and the rocking chair. The city is represented by both New York and Chicago, and is a microcosm of Dreiser's universe. Nature is grim and unfeeling; so is the city. Unless one is strong and productive and fortunate, he faces the world's indifference, magnified by the city, where man is perhaps more isolated than elsewhere. For example, when Hurstwood is dying, he suffers so alone despite Carrie's presence in a nearby apartment, Drouet's relative closeness in a hotel, and his wife's pending arrival on the train, for none knows, nor cares, about his tragedy. Dreiser's concept of an uncaring and ever-changing universe is equally conveyed by his use of the sea and the rocking chair. Again and again Carrie is described as a "lone figure in a tossing, thoughtless sea." (p. 15) Like its counterpart, the city, the sea symbol suggests that only the strong or the lucky survive. And the rocking chair hints at the futility of this constant flux, for a rocking chair is in continual motion but goes nowhere. Although Carrie's life would seem to improve, she is sitting in a rocking chair not only at the novel's beginning but also at its end. While this circular development suggests that Carrie has small chance to be truly happy, the fact that she

continues to struggle for her personal prosperity provides evidence of her never-ceasing aspiration. Commenting on Dreiser's utilization of the symbolic technique, Donald Pizer asserts: "Dreiser is much more successful as a symbolic than as a metaphoric writer."⁴¹ He points out that clothes are used symbolically, as an index of taste and social position. Money is also used symbolically, because the physical transfer of money is an act which promises so much for both the body and the spirit that it either entails or suggests the sexual.⁴² Soon after Carrie gets money from Drouet, she inevitably becomes his mistress.

Dreiser's symbolism of the commonplace clarifies themes which are otherwise open to misunderstanding. For example, the detailed rendering of the physical process of Hurstwood's decay--his clothes, activities, rooms and appearance--creates out of the circumstantial objects of a man's life a highly structured pattern of event and object which communicates, above all, a moving psychological and emotional reality.⁴³

Description or descriptive technique is used to reveal many details about Carrie Meeber and other characters. Dreiser describes the characters, their actions, clothes and scenery. For example, the descriptive opening paragraph tells us vividly about Carrie, what she carried for her trip to Chicago (that is, a small trunk, a cheap imitation alligator-skin satchel, a small lunch in a paper box, and a

⁴¹Pizer, The Novels of Theodore Dreiser, p. 91.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

yellow leather snap purse, containing her ticket, a scrap of paper with her sister's address in Van Buren Street, and four dollars in money (p. 7), as well as the sad reaction of her mother to her departure. This example illustrates the fact that Dreiser uses his own authorial voice as a third-person narrator to describe vividly details about characters, time and place, the effect being that the reader obtains a lively picture of what is happening.

Vignettes are also used vividly, especially toward the close of the novel. One of the vignettes presents Carrie in her "comfortable chambers at the Waldorf" (p. 457), where she is reading Pere Goriot and is moved by it sufficiently to sympathize with "the people who haven't anything tonight." (p. 458) But she does not think of Hurstwood. She is still the Carrie who played the faithful lady so convincingly at the moment she was becoming deeply interested in Hurstwood. She is capable of responding to the noble sentiments and tragedies of life so long as that response does not impinge on self-interest. Her last reflection in the novel is that she will have to take a coach to the theater. During the evening there occurs a storm. She may sympathize with those affected by the storm, but her immediate concern is the effect of the storm on her.⁴⁴

Another vignette describes Drouet in his New York hotel. He is occupied with thoughts of entertainment for the evening that "will shut out the snow and gloom of life." (p. 458) A third vignette abruptly returns us to the closed, vacuous world of Mrs. Hurstwood, whom we have

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 94.

not met since her last bitter argument with Hurstwood in Chicago. She has succeeded in arranging a wealthy match for her daughter, Jessica, and she and the newly married couple are in a pullman car en route to New York and then to Rome in order to escape the cold of a Midwest winter. Still another example of the vignette is one of Hurstwood. A few days earlier he had attempted to approach Carrie. Now he is waiting in the cold for a flophouse to open. There is no longer any warmth for him to escape into; there is only death. He turns on the gas, but does not light it. Hurstwood, who had always treasured life, has been driven by sheer animal misery and psychological debilitation to abandon life, in a death which Dreiser sees as both horrible and completely inevitable. The vignette technique of the final section of the novel is used to illustrate the ebb and flow of life. Some, like Hurstwood, fall along the way.⁴⁵ He has become part of the "class which simply floats and drifts, every wave of people washing up one, as breakers do driftwood upon a stormy shore." (p. 451) Some, like Carrie, rise, always grasping for the next narrow ledge, but never know the happiness of which they dream. Others, like Drouet and Hurstwood's wife and daughter, simply continue along the same dead run, never knowing what the future may bring. All the above vignettes, which occur at the conclusion of the novel, reveal Dreiser's attempt to gather together the major themes of the novel. After rendering a final glimpse of all the important characters, he turns his attention to Carrie as a representative of the universal striving of humanity. She longs for

⁴⁵Ibid.

love, fame, and wealth. She gets all of these, but at the end she is still yearning for the unattained and unattainable. Commenting on Dreiser's usage of vignettes, one critic asserts that:

The four concluding vignettes are in part an adaptation of the nineteenth-century convention of an authorial summing up of the fates of the principal characters in a novel. But they are also dramatic scenes which contain the dominant symbolic motifs of the novel, motifs which rise to a finely orchestrated finale. The search for comfort, pleasure, social position, and love has been for each of the major figures in the vignettes a search for warmth. Dreiser's four concluding vignettes are a moving and complex representation, through scene and symbol, of the principal themes of the novel.⁴⁶

The critical reception of Sister Carrie can be divided into two time frames, namely criticism written in the same period or slightly after the novel was published and that which came some years later. The novel was not well received initially for reasons which are indicated below.

The reviews which Sister Carrie received in Great Britain were unlike those it received upon its publication in the United States, the former being more positive than the latter. There were many critical reviews of Sister Carrie between 1900 to 1907. Jack Salzman cites one hundred and twenty-six review articles which appear in American newspapers and journals. Besides these, there were those which appeared in Great Britain.⁴⁷

Some of the reviews maintained that Sister Carrie was dangerous because it defied conventional views of morality and because Dreiser had written about poverty, sex and the evils of modern American society.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 94-95.

⁴⁷Jack Salzman, ed., Theodore Dreiser: The Critical Reception (New York: David Lewis, Inc., 1972), pp. xxxvi-55.

Nevertheless, the novel was upheld by later critics and reviewers who considered the book a "masterpiece." Hence the subsequent reception of Sister Carrie as the years went by was increasingly favorable everywhere. That fact means that early reviews were significantly negative and later ones more positive. Many critical essays, articles and books have been written on Sister Carrie praising it for its realism and naturalism. H. L. Mencken wrote of this foremost naturalistic novel, "Its outstanding merit is its simplicity, its unaffected seriousness and fervor;" Ford Madox Ford observed, "In my mind, the idea of Sister Carrie exists as a goldenish spot in the weariness of the world."⁴⁸

Contemporary reception of Sister Carrie has been overwhelmingly positive. Reaction to the book has been surprisingly widespread. Readers have been struck by the sincerity, powerful detail and massive impact of his work. Dreiser has a secure niche among top-ranking American naturalists.

In conclusion, one can say that Dreiser's techniques are compelling, since through them he compellingly voices his message on the social, economic and political status of early twentieth-century American society. Sister Carrie, like most of Theodore Dreiser's novels, embodies his naturalistic belief that, while men are controlled and conditioned by heredity, instinct, and chance, a few extraordinary and usually unsophisticated human beings refuse to accept their fate wordlessly and instead strive, unsuccessfully, to find meaning and purpose for their existence. Despite its title, the novel is not a

⁴⁸These two quotations appear on the back cover of Dreiser's Sister Carrie (New York: New American Library, Inc., 1900).

study of a family, but of Carrie's strangely unemotional relationships with three men and of the resulting and unexpected changes which occur in her outlook and status.

The next section will discuss F. Scott Fitzgerald and his novel, The Great Gatsby.

Since chapter three has detailed Fitzgerald's life and significance, these will not be included here. Instead, attention will be focused on The Great Gatsby, which was published in 1925, only about seven years after the First World War. It is a novel of social criticism whose locale is New York City and Long Island.

The Great Gatsby belongs to that literature which endeavors honestly to present the American scene during those riotous years from the First World War to the Great Depression. If F. Scott Fitzgerald's view of character was limited, it may be because his overall comprehension of society was so positive. His acute sensibility was devoted to an understanding of the results of human action, rather than to an understanding of the reasons for human action.

One of the foremost themes of The Great Gatsby is urban life, with emphasis on the lives of people in one of the great urban centers. There is Nick Carraway, a young bond salesman and the first-person narrator of The Great Gatsby, one who "likes New York City, its beauty, its women and its machines."⁴⁹ There are also the wealthy people in the urban area, for example, "Mrs. Daisy Buchanan and Mr. Tom Buchanan."

⁴⁹F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), p. 38. All subsequent quotations will be cited from this edition, unless otherwise noted.

(p. 4) "Their house was even more elaborate than I (Carraway) expected, a cheerful red-and-white Georgian colonial mansion, overlooking the bay." (p. 4) Even Jay Gatsby, a racketeer of the twenties and the protagonist, lives in a mansion.

My (Nick Carraway's) house was at the very tip of the egg, only fifty yards from the sound, and squeezed between two huge places that rented for twelve or fifteen thousand a season. The one on my right was a colossal affair by any standard. It was a factual imitation of some Hotel de Ville in Normandy, with a tower on one side, spanking new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming pool, on more than forty acres of lawn and garden. It was Gatsby's mansion. Or rather, since I didn't know Mr. Gatsby, it was a mansion inhabited by a gentleman of that name. (p. 4)

Unlike Dreiser's characters, undergoing the hazards of earning a living in the urban centers, Fitzgerald's belong to a post World War I "lost generation," the generation which sought affluence, status, leisure and self-indulgence in urban areas.

Nostalgia, which literally means "homesickness" or "homecoming," is a theme dealt with in The Great Gatsby. As Jay Gatsby says: "'Can't repeat the past?' ... 'Why of course you can!'" (p. 73), indicating his nostalgia. The critic Wright Morris says that although some writers, like Wolfe, Hemingway and Faulkner, dealt with the theme of nostalgia,

It was left to F. Scott Fitzgerald, the playboy, to carry this subject to its logical conclusion. In fictional terms, this is achieved in The Great Gatsby. It was Fitzgerald, dreaming of paradise, who was compelled to an aesthetic contemplation that made of nostalgia, that snare and delusion, a work of art.⁵⁰

⁵⁰Wright Morris, "The Function of Nostalgia: F. Scott Fitzgerald," in F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Collection of Critical Essays. Edited by Arthur Mizener (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 25.

Jay Gatsby, the protagonist, reminisces about his past, his birth of wealthy parents in San Francisco, his education at Oxford and his participation in the First World War as a lieutenant. Thus, through Gatsby, Fitzgerald vividly portrays the theme of nostalgia. Morris comments on the significance of Fitzgerald's presentation of the theme of nostalgia:

The elusive rhythm, that fragment of lost words, that ghostly rumble among the drums are now, thanks to Fitzgerald, a part of our inheritance. Those who were never there, will now be there, in a sense more compelling than those who were there, since they will face it, and grasp it, in the lucid form of Fitzgerald's craft.⁵¹

Nostalgia thus forms one of the significant themes in The Great Gatsby.

Wealth provides another theme in The Great Gatsby which goes hand in hand with the question of success, sex and morality. Social manners were inevitably affected by such powerful wealth as that possessed by characters in the novel. According to Fitzgerald, wealth seemed necessary; therefore he does not disapprove of it. Nonetheless, because money so frequently took full possession of conspicuously wealthy people, he sees it as often misguiding all their actions. That tendency is revealed in The Great Gatsby through Fitzgerald's portrayal of the charming Daisy, with whom Gatsby is desperately in love. Her desire for wealth causes her to desert Gatsby while he is a poor soldier in order to marry the wealthy Tom. The marriage, however, proves to be an unhappy one. In other words, money provides for Daisy the materials for happiness, but it fails to provide the necessary inspiration which

⁵¹Ibid., p. 26.

Fitzgerald feels to be important. He reveals, through a conversation between Nick and Gatsby, how "money has become a total part of Daisy." (p. 79-80)

During the 1920's, some American people measured success, failure and even virtue in monetary terms. To be corrupt and rich was seemingly the motto by which this new generation lived. Many people took "short cuts" to "quick wealth." That fact is evidenced, for example, by Gatsby, the notorious bootlegger who within three years becomes wealthy enough to live fabulously in Long Island and who also "extends an invitation to Nick Carraway to do the same." (p. 54) Since Nick stands for the older values that prevailed in the Middle West before the First World War, he refuses Gatsby's offer. He comes from a family not tremendously rich, like the Buchanans, but which has a long-established and sufficient fortune; he has not been corrupted by seeking or spending money; he is very certain of his values. Nick thus is among the few people who have not been affected by the changing world of morals and manners which has resulted from the burgeoning economy after the war.

Fitzgerald was enormously interested in the social and moral influence of Prohibition's easy gold. Through his treatment of money, he reveals certain social and moral conditions which "are a clearly minted currency as readily negotiable as the money they all (his characters) have such a lot of."⁵² Note that as one reads about Gatsby's marble swimming pool and fabulous parties, the Buchanans' half-acre of roses and their sunken Italian garden and Cody's yacht, one at the same time

⁵²Richard Chase, The American Novel and Its Tradition (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1957), p. 16.

learns of certain social and moral conditions characteristic of the time. For example, one is made to see the disillusionment and restlessness which characterize these people.

The generation written about by Fitzgerald had lived through the war with illusions of eternal peace and perpetual democracy, but it was disappointed by that conflict's bruising aftermath. Such disappointment made this new generation restless. It is this feeling of restlessness which Fitzgerald captures in The Great Gatsby. He tells his readers that the wealthy Buchanans had "drifted here and there 'unrestfully' wherever people played polo and were rich together." (p. 6) Daisy Buchanan's question is typical of the restlessness which characterized the period. "'What'll we do with ourselves this afternoon?' cried Daisy, 'and the day after that, and the next thirty years?'" (p. 78) The sought-after answer here was undoubtedly "entertain and be entertained." There began immediately a frenetic pursuit of entertainment and debauchery.

Fitzgerald also includes the activities of leisure, like the many parties in the novel. Parties were actually the most typical manifestation of the twenties' demand for diversion. They gave to society personal and vital occasions for escape, occasions through which the moment could be filled with the amusement, the excitement, the tension and the challenge of personalities at close quarters. Time and life were measured in terms of these spirited entertainments; time not spent at a party was time spent in anticipation of one.

Fitzgerald also includes the fact that unhappiness and dissatisfaction with married life were prevalent in some married people. For example, Tom, Daisy's husband, finds it necessary to find a mistress in

the valley of ashes. His mistress, Myrtle Wilson, admits to her sister, Catherine, that she is actually tired of her husband. (p. 23) Indeed, as Catherine remarks in a whisper about her sister Myrtle and Tom, "Neither of them can stand the person they are married to." (p. 22) Catherine here, of course, misrepresents Tom's feeling for Daisy, whom he will never abandon for any other woman, certainly not for Myrtle Wilson. Nonetheless, Fitzgerald is here criticizing marriage as a social institution during the era after the First World War.

According to Fitzgerald the moralist, the central moral problem of American life was raised in acute form among the rich, in the conflict between the possibilities of their life and their insensibility. He saw the rich and successful as the only people in the world with the opportunity to lead the good life. In the process of trying to become a heroic member of their community, he came to know them exceedingly well. He discovered what he considered to be the true facts about the rich. Speaking of the wealthy, Tom and Daisy, Fitzgerald has Nick say "'They're a rotten crowd.' ... 'You're worth the whole damn bunch put together.'" (p. 103) Again, when referring to them he says "They were careless people... who let other people clean up the mess they had made." (p. 120)

Thus, regarding the themes in The Great Gatsby, it may be said that Fitzgerald captured many of the characteristics of the 1920's. For example, the powerful and corruptive wealth of the period which so easily influenced the social manners and morals of the day, the newly accepted moral code and the social and moral irresponsibility which resulted from such. Fitzgerald's moral judgment upon the moral "carelessness" of the rich is also revealed in that novel. As one

critic says, "Increasingly, modern critics are recognizing that The Great Gatsby makes a searching critique of American society."⁵³

Important as content is, however, it is form that shapes the novel's unity, until ultimately the form and the content become inseparably united in an artistic whole. Form here refers to the structure or arrangement of material in that novel. In fact, of all Fitzgerald's novels, The Great Gatsby exhibits the greatest consciousness of form in its construction, and hence the ensuing discussion on form here. Fitzgerald's method of narration illustrates this consciousness of form. One of the numerous consequences of using Nick Carraway as a first-person narrator is that the sense of immediacy is increased, making the whole novel more dramatic. Thus the role of the narrator is very important both in terms of formal structure and thematic content.

As one critic puts it: "Nearly every critic of The Great Gatsby has stressed the tremendous structural importance of the narrator, Nick Carraway."⁵⁴ Various views regarding Fitzgerald's creation of Nick Carraway have asserted that it is a very admirable invention. One critic has said: "Nick Carraway, the narrator of Gatsby, is one of Fitzgerald's happier inventions. It is he who sets the moral tone of

⁵³John W. Bicknell, "The Wasteland of F. Scott Fitzgerald," in F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Collection of Criticism. Edited by Kenneth E. Eble (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973), p. 67.

⁵⁴W. J. Harvey, "Theme and Texture in The Great Gatsby" in Twentieth-Century Interpretations of The Great Gatsby: A Collection of Critical Essays. Edited by Ernest H. Lockridge (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 91.

the story. He gives to it its unity and meaning."⁵⁵ Although Nick is not the titular hero of the novel, his character makes him almost as much a central figure as Gatsby himself. With a sense of morality based on his midwestern heritage, he can perceive the flaws in Gatsby's dream and the basic differences that make Gatsby a better person than the Buchanans. Functioning as Fitzgerald's voice in making his ultimate value judgments, Nick realizes that an ideal based on materialism alone is a corruption rather than a fulfillment of the American dream, and yet the selfless devotion to even a corrupt ideal is morally superior to the complete selfishness that motivates everyone except Gatsby.⁵⁶

Furthermore, techniques such as characterization, symbolism, plot and setting contribute to the book's structure, and they will be discussed below.

Daisy Fay Buchanan, Nick Carraway's cousin, the wife of Tom Buchanan, the mother of one daughter, is presented as a charming woman and a lover of money with whom Gatsby is desperately in love. From the beginning it is clear that, despite her outward contrast with her husband's brutality, she and Tom are really partners in a "secret society" of established wealth and that she could never leave Tom for Gatsby. Nonetheless, Tom and Daisy are unhappily married. Their crucial dilemma is that Daisy knows her husband to be deliberately unfaithful.

⁵⁵Milton Hindus, F. Scott Fitzgerald: An Introduction and An Interpretation (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968), p. 40.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

Tom Buchanan, Daisy's husband, is a wealthy ex-athlete and graduate of Yale who is also a liar, a hypocrite and a bully, as well as an adulterous husband. As the representative of the morality and values of the established rich class, Tom is contrasted both with Gatsby's idealism and Nick's personal integrity. Having neither quality makes him admirably equipped to succeed in a world in which idealism is impossible and integrity difficult. While Gatsby dies and Nick returns to the Middle West, Tom is able to stay in the moral wasteland without any of Nick's feelings of "provincial squeamishness" over what has happened. All Tom's feelings and actions are self-directed. He entertains his guests by showing off his possessions, including his mistress, and he experiences anxiety only when he fears he is about to lose both Daisy and Myrtle. Incapable of guilt over causing Gatsby's death, he wallows in self-pity over the loss of his mistress.⁵⁷

Jay Gatsby, the protagonist, is a neighbor of Nick Carraway. He is a mysterious man of great wealth who entertains his neighbors lavishly, but whose past is unknown to them. He dreamed of riches as a means of achieving the golden vision of love and life with his old sweetheart, Daisy. To make this dream come true, he has built a fortune on fraud and violence. James Gatz, later Jay Gatsby, is portrayed as a poor boy born in the Middle West who is driven to try to realize his dream of great wealth, success and elegance. By the time America entered the First World War, Gatz had become Gatsby, a lieutenant stationed at Camp Taylor, Kentucky, and had a Louisville sweetheart, a certain Daisy Fay,

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 42.

the first "nice girl," as he puts it, whom he had ever known and one who was to embody all his dreams. But he went to France and Daisy Fay married Tom Buchanan of Chicago, handsome and fabulously rich with established Chicago money. After the war, Tom and Daisy are occupying a great house on Long Island, leading a reckless and idle life, with Tom seeking excitement in his adulteries. Gatsby, now rich from underworld activities and still obsessed with Daisy, takes a house near the Buchanan place, near enough so that at night he can see the "green light" on Daisy's dock. He begins to give wild parties for the heterogeneous, floating population of the jazz age, all the while hoping to snatch Daisy from what he assumes to be her miserable life with Tom and thus to recapture the past and his dream. He does manage to encounter Daisy, does persuade her, for the moment, that the past can be recaptured, and almost persuades her that she had never, in any sense, loved Tom. Nevertheless, in a showdown scene with both he is exposed for the shabby charlatan that, in one sense, he is.

The same afternoon, Daisy, driving Gatsby's car, accidentally runs down and kills Myrtle Wilson. In the sequel, Tom manages to convince her husband, George Wilson, now mad with grief and jealousy, who already suspects that Gatsby has been his wife's lover, that Gatsby had killed the woman. Later, Gatsby, waiting for some word from Daisy, is shot to death by Wilson, who then commits suicide. Fitzgerald sums up the reality of Tom and Daisy in saying, "They were careless people, they smashed up things and creatures and they retreated back into their money on their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made... ." (p. 120)

Ultimately, by presenting Jay Gatsby as a rich, generous party-giver, a faithful and loyal person with some ignorance and short-sightedness regarding other people's attitudes, thoughts and behavior towards him, and as a man full of high romantic hopes, Fitzgerald successfully reflects the story of the "American dream." Near the end of the novel Gatsby awaits a call from Daisy that never comes, but he dies an incurable romantic, clinging still to an ideal conception of his beloved which she is incapable of fulfilling in reality. Nick, who in some ways serves as Gatsby's double, is left with the bitter knowledge that the dream of getting ahead and winning the perfect girl is corrupt from the start. Nevertheless, Nick retreats from the scene of Gatsby's splendor with the conviction that life without the dream is barren and empty. Just as Gatsby's romantic idealism--in Fitzgerald's words, his "heightened sensitivity to the promises of life"--transcends his American origin, the novel has implications that go beyond the time and place depicted.⁵⁸

Plot organized as tragedy is another technique emphasized by Fitzgerald in The Great Gatsby. In Aspects of the Novel (1927) E. M. Forster describes a story as "a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence, evoking in the reader merely curiosity."⁵⁹ He goes on to say that "A plot is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality."⁶⁰ Thus it demands of the reader both memory and

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 43.

⁵⁹E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927), p. 130.

⁶⁰Ibid.

intelligence. A writer may find a story anywhere--mythology, previous literature, a newspaper--but only if he shapes it into a plot will it produce an artistic effect and so express his meaning. The primary discussion of the structure of a plot is that of Aristotle in the Poetics.

A unified plot, he says, has a beginning (that which is not necessarily caused by something else but which produces other events), a middle (which derives from what has gone before and from which something else must follow), and an end (something that depends on what has happened, but which need be followed by nothing else). Aristotle says further that the plot should be so constructed that no incident can be displaced or omitted without destroying the unity of the whole. The presence of a single hero is not sufficient, he continues, to give unity. A plot which consists of a series of disconnected incidents, even though it may center on one figure, he calls "episodic" and ranks as inferior.⁶¹

Fitzgerald uses plot to pursue various ideas (which have already been discussed earlier in this paper) in The Great Gatsby. It can be summarized in a paragraph or two. As spring begins in 1922 Nick Carraway rents a house in West Egg on Long Island Sound. He then becomes involved in the lives of his neighbors. Nearby, in East Egg, live his cousin Daisy Buchanan and her rich, burly, racist, congenitally unfaithful husband Tom, whose current mistress is Myrtle Wilson. Next door to Nick, in an enormous mansion, lives Jay Gatsby, a mysterious man of great wealth. Gatsby, whose past was unknown to his neighbors, entertains lavishly. While visiting the Buchanans, Nick meets Jordan Baker, a petulant, charming girl flawed by an incurable dishonesty; from her he learns (truthfully) that, as a young officer about to go

⁶¹Aristotle, The Poetics, trans Leon Golden (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), pp. 161-162.

overseas, Gatsby had been in love with Daisy in 1917, before her marriage to Buchanan.

At Gatsby's request, Nick arranges a meeting between himself and Daisy, the first of several meetings. But Daisy cannot break away from Tom, particularly after she learns that Gatsby's wealth comes from racketeering. As Daisy drives Gatsby back to Long Island from a party in New York, they run down and kill Myrtle Wilson, but do not stop. Although Gatsby is willing to take the blame if the death should be traced to his car, he painfully reveals to Nick that Daisy had been at the wheel. Daisy, on the other hand, allows Tom to tell Myrtle Wilson's husband George (who already thinks that Gatsby was his wife's lover) that Gatsby was responsible for Myrtle's death. Wilson shoots Gatsby and then himself. Using this tragic plot, Fitzgerald endeavors honestly to present the jazz age (1920's) in America.

Style here refers to such features as diction, dialogue, the use of a first-person narrator, syntax and grammar. Diction, or the choice and arrangements of words, is simple, clear and to the point in The Great Gatsby, which is not detailed, for it is only 121 pages in length. Through precision and concision in choice of words, Fitzgerald vividly treats his themes regarding American society. For example, in describing the materialistic ideal of Gatsby, he describes Gatsby's car:

At nine o'clock one morning late in July, Gatsby's gorgeous car lurched up the drive to my (Carraway's) door and gave out a burst of melody from its three-noted horn. It was a rich cream color, bright with nickel, swollen here and there in its monstrous length with triumphant hat-boxes and supper-boxes and tool-boxes, and terraced with a labyrinth of wind-shields that mirrored a dozen suns. (pp. 41-42)

In America the automobile ranks first among status symbols, and Gatsby's gorgeous machine is the ne plus ultra of automobiles. "Swollen" with

protuberances and of "monstrous" length, it is an overblown absurdity created by wealth to fulfil the American dream of personal material success. Later is it also the fatal car that kills Myrtle Wilson and leads indirectly to Gatsby's own death. Hence here the reader can see Fitzgerald's usage of words economically and his sense of careful construction at work in the use of the symbolic automobile to support the thesis that Gatsby's ideal, like that of most Americans, is based on materialism. By the end of the novel, the reader learns, according to Fitzgerald, that this kind of ideal is ultimately destructive.⁶²

Dialogue is powerfully utilized in The Great Gatsby. Fitzgerald alternates the speech or comments of the first-person narrator with dialogue among other characters to effectively convey his message. This way we can have the insight into the characters' minds as spoken by themselves, instead of getting second-hand information through the narrator. In the following dialogue between Gatsby and Carraway, the former's origin is revealed.

I'm (Gatsby) the son of some wealthy people in the Middle West--all dead now. I was brought up in America but educated at Oxford, because all my ancestors have been educated there for many years. It is a family tradition.

'What part of the Middle West?,' I (Nick Carraway) inquired casually.

San Francisco.

'I see.'

My family all died and I came into a good deal of money.
(pp. 42-43)

⁶²E. K., review of The Great Gatsby, in International Book Review, 25 May 1925, p. 426.

In the above dialogue, Gatsby gives Nick his supposed autobiography, which is revealing in its comic vulgarity. Voluntarily cut off from his real past and left to create a personal history to fit the image he wishes to project, Gatsby invents an adolescent dream-history, borrowed from sentimental romances and documented with realistic props. However, like the parties, Gatsby's autobiography is brought into being solely for the purpose of attaining his goal, and therein lies the essential purity of the man. All that he has done, despite its vulgarity and obvious falsity, has been directed toward a single, transcendent ideal, and this lifts Gatsby above the world of sordid materialism into a sphere where he merits Nick's admiration.⁶³

Nick Carraway, the narrator, is a young bond salesman committed to order and decorum. In the short sketch of himself which he provides before beginning his narrative, he tells us that his family (remotely related to some dukes) have been prominent well-to-do people in the same mid-western city for three generations and that he graduated from Yale, as did his father before him. He chose the bond business as a career because everyone he knew was in that business, and in that choice all his uncles and aunts concurred. One piece of advice from his father he apparently found sufficient for the conduct of life was, "Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone, just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had." (p. 1) As a

⁶³Peter Lisca, "Nick Carraway and the Imagery of Disorder," Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal 13(April 1967):19-21.

consequence, Nick was inclined to reserve all judgments. He believes that advice made him reasonably tolerant. As one critic points out:

As the narrator continues, he seems to take every opportunity to display his large 'sense of the fundamental decencies,' which resolve themselves into good manners, good taste, and orderliness. The first incident in the book, his visit to the Buchanans, reveals much of this. He is obviously embarrassed to find Miss Jordan Baker stretched out full-length on a couch, having no inclination to assume a more formal position in the presence of a stranger. When he comes to understand that the person calling on the telephone is Tom's mistress and that both Jordan and Daisy know this, he tells us that his 'instinct' was to telephone immediately for the police.⁶⁴

His moral point of view is different from that of the other characters. His ultimate rejection of the Buchanans, like his rejection of Jordan Baker, is postulated in terms of order and disorder. He rejects them because according to his estimation "they were careless people." (p. 120) As Peter Lisca concludes,

By having Nick tell the novel Fitzgerald is able to smuggle into the novel weighted descriptions and judgments with which to intensify the contrast between that order and disorder which is the novel's central axis around which all other major meanings are oriented.⁶⁵

Syntax or sentence structure in The Great Gatsby is simple and clear. The simplicity of Fitzgerald's usual syntax makes it easy for one to read the book within a short time and without any difficulty in understanding its message.

Fantastic satire is another technique employed by Fitzgerald. Satire in literature refers to the ridicule of any subject--an idea or institution, an actual person or type of person, or even mankind in

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 18.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 26.

general--to lower it in the reader's esteem and make it laughable. Fitzgerald satirizes the American society of the 1920's through The Great Gatsby. He satirizes the moral emptiness, hypocrisy and gossip of the wealthy American society of that period in his picture of the urban life. He skillfully uses sarcasm and irony in Nick's attack on and ridicule of the habits, ideas, and customs of the other characters, and therefore, through symbolism, to ridicule the American scene during the era following the First World War.

Melodrama is also found in The Great Gatsby. Melodrama here refers to:

The depiction of the conflict of despicable evil and extraordinary good, as personified in the hero (or heroine), who is always a model of magnanimous virtue, and the villain, who exists in the novel for the express purpose of making other people's lives wretched.⁶⁶

Fitzgerald's use of melodrama is illustrated through his treatment of Nick, the orderly and decorous, while the rest of the characters represent disorder and indecorum. Also, it is Nick's sense of decorum and order that prevents him from accepting Gatsby's offer of putting him in the way of making a "nice bit of money," because the offer was obviously and tactlessly made for a service to be rendered.

Detective-story technique is also used in The Great Gatsby. A detective story is a narrative in which mystery, frequently involving murder, is unraveled by a detective.

First published as a distinct literary form by Poe in 'Murders in the Rue Morgue' (1841), the detective story generally contains at least some of these conventions: the seemingly

⁶⁶Laurence Perrine, ed., Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense (New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1983), p. 1466.

perfect crime, the dull-wittedness of the police, the detective's confidant, who lacks his associate's brilliance, but who always asks questions which clarify the situation, the suspect who appears guilty from the circumstantial evidence but who is later proved innocent, 'the sensational denouement,' in which the detective explains in minute detail who killed whom and how. The method of discovery is, of course, deductive, for it is generally axiomatic that the sleuth should not be in possession of clues of which he is unaware. By genius plotting, the writer of the detective story invites his readers to match wits with the central characters, as both uncover clues leading to the culprit.⁶⁷

In The Great Gatsby the detective story technique is used towards the end of the novel. Nick, Jordan and Tom discovered an ambulance picking up the dead Myrtle Wilson, struck by a hit-and-run driver in a yellow car. Tom desired vengeance against Gatsby at any cost. He also remained determined to protect Daisy from whatever had happened to destroy the desperate Myrtle. Later, of course, he pretended to Nick to believe firmly that Gatsby had struck and killed her, leaving her to die.

In the meantime, George Wilson, having traced the yellow car to Gatsby, appeared on the Gatsby estate. A few hours later, both he and Gatsby were discovered dead. The mystery of the murderer in the readers' minds is: Who killed both Gatsby and Wilson? Did Gatsby kill Wilson and then kill himself? Did Wilson kill Gatsby, then kill himself? or might there have been a third person who killed both Gatsby and Wilson? Later, the reader learns that Wilson had shot Gatsby and then killed himself.

⁶⁷Edward Wagenknecht, A Preface to Literature (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1954), pp. 207-208.

The usage of detective story technique is powerful here, for it keeps the readers reading on because of their curiosity about the unidentified culprit. There is a kind of puzzle, with the readers trying to match wits with the central characters, as both uncover clues leading to the culprit. As one review of The Great Gatsby asserts:

Reading The Great Gatsby, one has an impression that the author entertained in his urbane and ever more polished imagination ideas for a melodrama, a detective story, and a fantastic satire, with his usual jazz-age extravaganza adding its voice to the mental conversation. And the result is not confusion, but a graceful, finished tale, as if each of the four had contributed a keen well-timed remark to a well-mannered and highly efficient committee meeting.⁶⁸

Irony is another technique used in the novel. Irony is a device by which a writer expresses a meaning contradictory to the stated or ostensible one. There are many techniques for achieving irony. A writer may, for example, make it clear that the meaning he intends is the opposite of his literal one, or he may construct a discrepancy between an expectation and its fulfillment, or between the appearance of a situation and the reality that underlies it. Irony is used in various ways. For example, Gatsby invites a lot of guests, all of whom pretend to be his friends, to his parties. When he dies, all of them desert him; even his racketeering associates are absent. Only his father attends his funeral, possibly meaning that "blood is thicker than water." It is also ironical that at no time did Gatsby respect or trust his "guests," whom he never confused with genuine friends or

⁶⁸E. K., "Review of The Great Gatsby" in International Book Review, 25 May 1925, p. 426.

associates. In fact, they gossiped about him precisely because he remained remote from them.

Another ironical situation lies in the mystery of the death of Myrtle Wilson. While George Wilson is made to believe that Gatsby, not Daisy, ran over his wife and killed her, the truth of the matter is that Daisy was the one driving. "He (Gatsby) ran over Myrtle like you'd run over a dog and never even stopped his car," (p. 120) asserts Tom, which is not true.

Phantasmagoria is another technique utilized in The Great Gatsby. Phantasmagoria here refers to illusions, imaginary fancies and deceptions, or it simply refers to a rapid change of things or imagined figures or events, as in a dream. Gatsby, as has often been said, represents the irony of American history and the corruption of the American dream. He was obsessed with the wonder of human life and driven by the search to make that wonder actual. Gatsby's dream is to procure a fortune, a mansion and a bride. Thus, through phantasmagoria, Fitzgerald portrays Gatsby as a representation of the world of illusions and dreams. Some critics, including Marius Bewley, say that "Gatsby's dreams and illusions represent those of America."⁶⁹ Thus Gatsby has his own deficiencies, and his compulsive optimism is realized in the text with rare assurance and understanding. And yet the very grounding of these deficiencies is Gatsby's goodness and faith in life, his compelling desire to realize all the possibilities of existence, his belief that we can have an earthly paradise populated by Buchanans. A

⁶⁹Marius Bewley, "Scott Fitzgerald's Criticism of America," p. 119.

great part of Fitzgerald's achievement is that he suggests effectively that these terrifying deficiencies are not so much the private deficiencies of Gatsby as deficiencies inherent in contemporary manifestations of the American vision itself--a vision no doubt admirable, but stupidly defenseless before the equally American world of Tom and Daisy. Gatsby's deficiencies of intelligence and judgment bring him to his tragic death--a death that is spiritual as well as physical.

Symbolism is another technique used in The Great Gatsby at various levels. At the level of characters, for example,

Tom and Daisy Buchanan represent the world of sophistication which had heretofore, by the sheer brightness of its glamor, blinded Fitzgerald to its frequent lack of a sense of those fundamental decencies.⁷⁰

On the other hand, Gatsby represents the American society of dreams and illusions, while the Wilsons symbolize the world of bleakness and ashen dust. Also, the minor character Dan Cody's significance is symbolic. While Cody's importance in advancing Gatsby's career is undeniable, the man has died before the time of the main action. He serves as an American "type," a man who struck it rich and was incapable of using his new-found wealth for anything but self-destructive purposes.

Then there is the symbolism of the "green light." Gatsby's first appearance is in his garden at night looking out at the single green dock-light which is the symbol of his dreams. He is content to "be alone," and isolation is an essential part of his make-up, a necessary

⁷⁰James E. Miller, Jr., F. Scott Fitzgerald: His Art and His Technique (New York: New York University Press, 1964), p. 119.

part of his god-like self-sufficiency. The green light, the contemporary signal which peremptorily summons the traveler on his way, serves well as the symbol for man in hurried pursuit of a beckoning but ever-elusive dream. In fact, if Gatsby's dream has particular application to America, as Lionel Trilling has suggested, probably no better symbol than the green light could be used for America's restless, reckless pursuit of the American dream.⁷¹

One set of symbols pervades the entire book and makes it, perhaps, a sharper commentary on contemporary civilization than the simple story would at first seem to provide. The symbols exist materially in a "certain desolate area of land" between West Egg and New York, near the Wilson garage:

This is a valley of ashes--a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens, where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. (p. 15)

The valley of ashes is significant to the novel because of its two important implications.

On one level, certainly, the valley of ashes represents the gray, dismal environment of the Wilsons and the life of the class to which they belong. Standing at the edge of the Wilson property, the valley casts its white ashen dust over them and all over all who stop at the garage. But, as Fitzgerald returns to the valley of ashes again and again and as he draws his characters one by one along the highway by its 'spasm of bleak dust,' the desolate area begins to take on a great significance: it becomes the primary backdrop against which the tragedy is played out. At one point, Fitzgerald refers to the valley as 'the Wasteland,' suggesting that it stands as a symbol for the spiritual aridity of the civilization about which he writes--the kind of barren and waterless

⁷¹Ibid., p. 123.

land that T. S. Eliot had conceived in his poem of that name.⁷²

Thus it is also significant to mention the natural symbolic affinity between Eliot's Waste (totally infertile) Land of the modern world and the Valley of Ashes, from which Myrtle Wilson believes she can escape with Tom Buchanan.

Fitzgerald also utilizes the catalog technique in listing the many guests who attend Gatsby's parties. It has been often noted that Nick lists the names of people who attended Gatsby's parties on the empty spaces of a timetable and that the names are amusing, for example, "The Leeches... Maurice A. Flink... Clarence Endive... The Fishguards... Whitebait... the Hammerheads" and so on. (pp. 40-41) The faded timetable on which the names of Gatsby's guests appears serves to characterize a whole social class, rather than a single person, and the names themselves are symbolic in their connotations. One effect of the listing is musical; as one reads the names, it sounds like a singsong, monotonous voice. Another significance of the list is that, as Nick embodies in the extreme the principles of order and decorum, so disorder and indecorum are embodied in all the other characters, from the anonymous people at Gatsby's parties to Gatsby himself.⁷³

Fitzgerald's ideas are effectively presented through his mature techniques, including his characterization, his use of the first-person narrator, his highly polished and often richly poetic prose, and his use of interrelated dialogue and symbolism, as discussed above.

⁷²Ibid., pp. 124-125.

⁷³Peter Lisca, "Nick Carraway and the Imagery of Disorder," p. 19.

What was/has been the reception of The Great Gatsby?, one may ask. Contemporary response to the novel was favorable. Reviews of it appeared in various journals and magazines such as Bookman, Boston Transcript, Dial, Independent, International Book Review, Literary Review of the New York Evening Post, New York Tribune, New York World, Outlook, Saturday Review of Literature and Springfield Republican, to name but a few. Most of the reviews were positive in discussion of the novel's portrayal of what the United States meant in terms of the reckless twenties. They agree that Fitzgerald endeavors honestly to present the American scene during the period following the First World War. A few of the critics negatively comment that there are limitations of style and imperfections in character development.

Later criticism of The Great Gatsby has been very favorable. That is evidenced by the fact that there are a great many critical articles and books on the novel appearing, especially from the 1960's to the present. Most of them credit the work for its significant themes and for its powerful techniques such as melodrama, fantastic satire and detective story technique; in short, they praise the vigorous imagination of Fitzgerald.

Thus Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby is chosen for study in this paper for its significance in honestly presenting the American scene during the stormy years which it covers, as well as because of the techniques it employs.

The next novel to be discussed is Ernest Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises (1926). First, however, the biography of Hemingway (1899-1961) and the historical setting of The Sun Also Rises will be treated.

Born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1899, Ernest Hemingway was educated there in the public schools. He became a reporter on the Kansas City Star and in World War I served as an ambulance driver in Italy, where he was badly wounded in action. After the war he settled in Paris as a correspondent for the Toronto Star, and it was there he began his serious writing career. His experiences during the war furnished the material for the great war scenes in A Farewell to Arms. For the Star he reported the post-war disturbance in the Near East and the revolution in Greece and then went to Lausanne in November, 1922, to report the peace conference. At this time a suitcase containing all his manuscripts--a novel, eighteen stories and thirty poems--was stolen. "When he returned to Paris to write for the Hearst newspaper, he began anew, receiving much encouragement in his work from Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound."⁷⁴ He later served as a war correspondent during the Spanish Civil War and World War II. In 1954 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. He died in Idaho in 1961.

Hemingway's literary career advanced with the publication of the novel The Sun Also Rises (1926) and Men Without Women (1927), a collection of short stories. At that time Hemingway's originality of style and forcefulness of presentation were generally recognized. His name became symbolic of a staccato, short declarative sentence style, and of a subject matter which included violence, athletic prowess, toughness, sex, frank language, excessive drinking of alcohol and obsession with death. He was praised for giving a new direction to

⁷⁴Harry R. Warfel, American Novelists of To-Day (New York: American Book Company, 1951), p. 200.

fictional prose style and was imitated by many established and many more beginning writers. Hemingway's reputation also grew as a sportsman, fisherman, boxer and big-game hunter.

Hemingway loved Spain, and when the army revolt led by General Francisco Franco burst into Civil War on July 18, 1936, the novelist raised forty thousand dollars on personal notes to purchase ambulances for the Loyalist forces and made several trips to Spain to report the events for the North American Newspaper Alliance. From these experiences came For Whom the Bell Tolls (1940), his own favorite among his novels.

The Sun Also Rises (1926), his first novel, describes the Americans who in the 1920's were given the name of the "lost generation" because they were self-exiles who lived in Europe and because they felt that World War I had doomed their lives. The young men and women in the novel spend their days in liquor, love, and fights, seeking in alcohol and physical sensations relief from their gloomy thoughts.⁷⁵

A Farewell to Arms (1929) is the love story of an American, Lieutenant Frederick Henry, attached to the Italian army, and Catharine Barkley, a Scottish nurse. The fighting in Italy in World War I supplies the background. This novel immediately achieved best-seller status and confirmed Hemingway's position as a stylist whose pungent sentences vividly recreate scenes, people, conversations, and the mood of the times.⁷⁶

⁷⁵Philip Young, Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration (Philadelphia: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1966), p. 80.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

To Have and To Have Not (1937) is about Harry Morgan, a strong, tough, individualistic fisherman, the owner of a fast motor boat, now living in Key West, Florida. He engages in smuggling and rum-running and dies of an escaping bank-robber's bullet. Contrasted with Morgan and other "have nots" are rich yacht-owners, writers and artists, the "haves." The theme as stated by Morgan is: "No matter how a man alone ain't got no bloody f---ing chance," meaning that an individual cannot win in life by himself.⁷⁷

For Whom the Bell Tolls (1940) concerns Robert Jordan, an American serving on the Loyalist side in the Spanish Civil War in 1936, who is deep behind the fascist lines with orders to blow up a bridge. During four days he guides guerrillas and sleeps in caves, meets and loves a Spanish girl, Maria, destroys the bridge, and dies by a fascist bullet. The thesis of the book is that the death of a man like Jordan, who is fighting for a cause, cannot be viewed with indifference by lovers of freedom.⁷⁸

Across the River and Into the Trees (1950) is the love story of a war-scarred colonel, Richard Cantwell, aged fifty-one, and an eighteen-year old countess in post World War II Venice during the three days before he dies of a heart attack. He talks about love, death, happiness, sorrow, hunting, food and war. He berates the highest officers whom he had seen serving in that war and praises infantrymen's courage.⁷⁹

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 100.

⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 103-104.

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 7-8.

In The Sun Also Rises the narrator is Jake Barnes, a newspaperman and wounded veteran of World War I. His associates include Lady Brett Ashley, an international adventuress; Robert Cohn, literary editor and minor novelist; and Bill Gorton, a humorist. The action is simple, moving from the cafe life on the Left Bank in Paris to the fiesta of San Fermin in Pamplona, Spain, where we meet the real hero of the novel, a young bullfighter named Pedro Romero. With Brett as queen bee, a quadrangular affair develops. Barnes' war wound prevents consummation of his love for Brett, and she has brief affairs with Cohn and Romero, finally rejecting both. Cohn, an amateur boxer, interrupts a seance between the bullfighter and the lady, hurting Romero badly. Next day, at the climactic bullfight of the fiesta, Romero proves his manhood in a magnificent triumph. A defeated Cohn departs the scene, and the novel ends with a sardonic interview between Brett and Jake in a Madrid taxicab.

One of Hemingway's epigraphs is a statement ascribed to Gertrude Stein, "You are all a lost generation." The novel rapidly became a handbook for so-called lost generationism among young people who had survived the war, lived a hand-to-mouth existence in foreign capitals, and spent their days in continuous motion from bar to bar. But Hemingway later explained that the novel's real theme is in the quotation from Ecclesiastes that gives him his title. The story's true hero is the abiding earth itself, while such generations as that of Jake, Brett, Romero and Cohn come and depart between sun and sun.

One of the basic themes in The Sun Also Rises is urban life. Unlike the treatment of that theme in Sister Carrie, in Hemingway's

novel he shows the post-World War I generation involved in leisure, rather than in the hazards detailed by Dreiser. The setting is the bars, taxis, restaurants and hotels of Paris and Spain. The mood and attitudes of the main characters are those of people on vacation. They attempt to adjust themselves to a life that is filled with tensions and complexities by reducing it to the rudimentary level. As a means of escape, they simplify things as much as possible. They eat, drink, take dope and indulge themselves in other leisure activities. The constant drinking of Jake Barnes and his friends, for example, is significant. "Have a drink" and "Have another drink" are the constant watchwords. In fact, a drink seems to be the panacea for every ill. An illustration of this occurs in a conversation following the bullfight: "'These bull-fights are hell on me,' Brett said. 'I'm limp as a rag.' 'Oh, you'll get a drink,' Mike said."⁸⁰ Similar incidents are repeated over and over again. The monotone sometimes changes to "We better eat," or "Where do we eat at?" When Brett has to make a decision about Romero, she takes that usual course.

'Here comes Brett,' Bill said. 'Hello, you chaps!' she said. 'I say, I have a thirst.' 'Get another big beer,' Bill said to the waiter. The beer came. Brett started to lift the glass mug and her hand shook. 'Good beer.' (p.206)

In this novel there is Hemingway's characteristic mixture of drinking and sex. However, the sex presented here is either prevented by circumstances, as in the case of Jake and Brett, or perverted or abnormal. Brett's love-life, a kind of war casualty in itself, has

⁸⁰Ernest Hemingway, The Sun Also Rises (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), p. 169. All subsequent quotations from this text will be cited from this edition, unless otherwise noted.

decayed into alcoholism and a series of casual sex-relaxations. As a result of her loss of womanliness, and in spite of her promiscuity, Brett has become desexed. She is introduced in the novel with a group of homosexuals, and "she is very much with them." (p. 28)

The obsession with sex--in both normal and abnormal manifestations--constitutes a large part of the texture of The Sun Also Rises. Hemingway regards sex as the most powerful of all the instincts of the natural man. As a result he interprets most conduct in terms of sex. "Closely allied with this preoccupation with sex is the constant eating and drinking of his characters. He is intensely interested in purely sensual experience."⁸¹

Jake Barnes takes an objective view of Brett. Though tormented, he is too honest not to see her for what she objectively is. She has not had a happy life, and Jake is prepared to take this into account when he judges her. He uses a combination of irony and pity when he thinks about Brett. When he realizes the hopelessness of the situation he insulates himself with drink, whereupon the cycle of eating and drinking begins again. (p. 169)

Violence in the lost generation is another theme in The Sun Also Rises. From the beginning of Hemingway's writing career the emotions of which he wrote were those stimulated by pain and killing, war and bullfighting, and big-game hunting. His novels express the view of the irrationalist--that evil and violence are organic parts of the condition

⁸¹Cora Pose Austin, "Irrationalism in the Novels of Ernest Hemingway" (Master's thesis, Atlanta University, 1954), p. 42.

of man and are no more avoidable than floods, earthquakes and other natural disasters. That conviction is explicit in The Sun Also Rises. Violent death is one of the principal themes of the novel, but the violence is that of the peacetime world.

During fiesta time Jake Barnes, Robert Cohn, Bill Gorton and Michael Campbell, accompanied by Brett Ashley, go, with a huge crowd, to see a bullfight. They first witness a colorful and significant ritual, "the unloading of the bulls, which precedes the bullfights." (p. 196) Hemingway uses this incident to portray violent death. Later, "Lady Brett and her coterie witnessed the actual bullfighting." (pp. 167-168) With all of its brutality, it is an excellent subject for Hemingway because it continuously involves the imminence and the risk of death. Both the evidence and the danger of death are conspicuously present throughout the novel.

In The Sun Also Rises Hemingway's treatment of the tensions resulting from World War I and their culmination in violence is masterful. He subtly makes it apparent that the violence comes as an unsatisfactory adjustment to a desperately unhappy situation that is the aftermath of the war. He skillfully uses this story to show the social disintegration of the postwar period; the characters are all, in one way or the other, victims of the war. Brett is completely unsettled by the fact that her fiancé died in the war and has begun the self-destruction that was inevitable. She is genuinely in love with Jake, who is kept from her by an impotency that is the result of a war accident. His condition mars his life and frustrates his love, but it establishes him as a sympathetic observer of Brett's search for sexual meaning. He watches her throw herself into brief, desperate affairs with other men,

as she tries to forget their own hopeless case. She has now become engaged to Mike Campbell, who has also been shattered by the war.

Brett's promiscuity and constant drinking bring on much quarreling and violence. A quarrel over Brett culminates when Robert Cohn knocks Jake out. Cohn later brutally beats Romero when he finds him with Brett. Brett characteristically stays with Michael Campbell for a time, yet is also in love with Pedro Romero. She also is involved briefly with Cohn, but at no point loves him.

Hemingway also includes in this novel the theme of religion, contrasting paganism and Christian orthodoxy. Underneath the matter-of-fact account of the fiesta of San Fermin, Hemingway's symbolism is at work. In several ways, he uses symbolism to depict the struggle between paganism and Christianity. He makes a natural and brilliant use of the fact that riau riau dances follow the procession which bears the city's patron saint through the streets of Pamplona.

The account is dramatized through Jake and Brett. Jake is a religious man, a professing Catholic who attends masses at the two Pamplona churches, the huge cathedral and the smaller chapel, before and during fiesta week. First Jake goes to the cathedral and begins to pray. The church stirs up traces of his Catholicism, and it is not important that his mind wanders and that he cannot pray in earnest. The ritual is observed; Jake honors the tradition in spite of keenly feeling his state of exile. Jake values the faith, for it provides a code for the faithful and there is much beauty in its ceremonies; just to be inside the cathedral is refreshing and strengthening. Outside, the heat dries the drops of holy water on his hand. There is no longer the cool and dim safety that the church afforded. (pp. 96-97) Then, on a

Saturday before the festival opens, Brett accompanies him to the chapel in Pamplona. "She said she wanted to hear me go to confession," (p. 150) says Jake, "but I told her that not only was it impossible, but it was not as interesting as it sounded, and besides, it would be in a language she did not know." (pp. 150-151) The language Brett does not know is the language of the Christian religion. When she goes soon afterward to have her fortune told at a gypsy camp, Brett hears language that she can understand.

Her true symbolic colors are shown on Sunday afternoon. She is in the streets with Jake watching the religious procession in which the image of San Fermin is carried from one church to another. Ahead of the procession and behind it are the dancers. When Jake and Brett try to enter the cathedral they are stopped at the door, ostensibly because she has no hat. (p. 151) This incident resembles the attempt of a witch to gain entry into a Christian sanctum. Brett's witchhood is immediately underscored. Back in the street, she is encircled by the chanting pagan dancers, who prevent her from joining their figure. They wanted to dance around her. When the song ends she is rushed to the wine shop and seated on an up-ended wine cask. (p. 169)

The intent of this episode is quite plain. Brett could not have understood the language used in Christian confessions. She is forbidden to follow the religious procession into the cathedral. The dancers adopt her as a pagan image. She is perfectly at home on the wine cask amidst the singing of the non-religious celebrants. Later in the fiesta week the point is reemphasized. Jake and Brett enter the cathedral so that she can pray for Romero's success in the final bullfight of the celebration. "After a little," says Jake, "I felt Brett stiffen beside

me, and saw she was looking straight ahead." (p. 155) Outside the cathedral, Brett explains what Jake has already guessed. "I'm damned bad for a religious atmosphere. I've got the wrong type of face."

(p. 156) She has, indeed. It is the face of "the reigning queen as a paganized wasteland." Through these incidents the contrast between paganism and Christian orthodoxy is artfully dramatized.

In his critical evaluation of The Sun Also Rises, Keith Neilson asserts that upon its publication the work was instantly accepted as one of the most important American novels of the post-World War I period.

Part of this recognition was due to the superficial fact that sophisticated readers 'identified' current expatriate 'celebrities' among the book's characters, but, as most of these personages faded into obscurity, the roman à clef aspect of the novel soon lost its appeal. A more important reason for the book's immediate success is that it perfectly captured the mood and style of the American artistic and intellectual 'exiles' who drank, loved, and searched for meaning on the Paris Left Bank in the aftermath of that first world struggle.⁸²

Hemingway succeeds in treating his themes through powerful techniques, one of which is characterization. Jake's private tragedy was a war wound which had emasculated him. In order not to think too much about himself, he spent a lot of time listening to the troubles of his friends and drinking heavily. When he grew tired of Paris he went on fishing trips to the Basque country or to Spain for the bullfights. He tries to avoid brooding over his bad luck, and he faces the truth of what has happened. He was wounded accidentally; there was no confrontation between himself and a specific opponent; he was given no

⁸²Keith Neilson, The Sun Also Rises: A Critical Evaluation (New York: Salem Press, 1949), p. 6337.

choice to behave either well or badly; his battle was not structured, for such are the evils of war. Now, in civilian life, he is given a chance to structure his battles and to realize his strengths and opportunities; his readjustment is conducted on his own terms. He can now attempt to maintain moral poise and to behave well. That he fails to do so, however, is not eternally damning, since the fact only demonstrates the powerful and uncontrollable love he has for Brett and the jealousy he harbors for Robert Cohn. His betrayal and his failure to adhere to his own ethical standards demonstrate that Jake is a flawed and very human male. In any analysis of his character, one finds that he imposes order on his life chiefly through his work. This is an accurate moral reflection of Hemingway's deepest convictions regarding the individual's maintenance of integrity and dignity in the chaos of the twentieth century. In the final analysis, as a man Jake surrenders Brett forever; she concedes her authentic longing for a life shared with him: "Oh Jake," Brett said, "we could have had such a damned good time together." (p. 247)

Hemingway intended to portray Jake Barnes as a war casualty. His wound is a metaphor for the conditions of the expatriates. They have all been damaged in some fundamental way by the war--physically, morally, emotionally, psychologically, economically--and their aimless existence can be traced back to it. Nevertheless, the real symbolic importance of Jake's wound is that while it has deprived him of the capacity to perform sexually, it has not rid him of the desire. The

people in The Sun Also Rises fervently want meaning and fulfillment, but they lack the ability and equipment to find it.⁸³

Lady Brett Ashley, another major character in The Sun Also Rises, drinks hard, disregards the double standard of sexual behavior, and sports a carefree, mannish hair-style. She is thirty-four years old; she is neither young nor an American, two facts American readers often forget, for she has the strength and spirit of today's young people.⁸⁴

As the novel opens, Brett has been married twice to men she did not love and is now engaged to a Scotsman--Mike Campbell--who is in line for a generous inheritance and remains blindly in love with her; Brett knows this, and despite his offensive drinking habits and his temper she has decided to marry him. After her affair with Romero she says that she will return to Mike and is sure that he will welcome her back. Brett is a strong woman; she has her way with most men, and Mike is no exception. Brett's affair with Romero is short-lived, but it is beautiful, and she decides to preserve it. She sends Romero away because they would eventually destroy each other. She will always know, though, that for a while she possessed the first man since Jake Barnes who was able to break her magnificent self-control. Brett returns to marry Mike, but makes one last request: she calls Jake to her and confesses all that has happened. She has ruined Cohn, is not good for Mike, has caused Jake to disgrace himself, but has separated herself

⁸³Carlos Baker, Ernest Hemingway: Critiques of Four Major Novels (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), p. 18.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, p. 20.

from Romero--a triumph for her willpower. However, Brett will always love Jake best. Confidant and friend, he will always be somewhat of a mystery to her. They have been denied each other, but Jake will always be a symbol to her of perfection and a happiness that might have been had fate and war not intervened. In sum, Brett shows signs of breaking up. Her neurosis drives her from bar to bar, from man to man and from city to city. All of this is futile. Her polygamy, with or without benefit of a justice of peace, leads only to more of the same, as one drink leads to another. Thus she, like the other members of the lost generation, leads an aimless existence.

Robert Cohn's case is also hopeless. He publicly proclaims his love for Brett, but she does not love him in return. She takes her affair with him rather lightly, but Cohn cannot forget it. He will not go away when Brett is done with him. When she finally goes off with the bullfighter, Romero, Cohn leaves Pamplona after Brett has murdered him socially and spiritually.

Critics have speculated on why Hemingway begins the novel with a long discussion of Cohn, a relatively minor character. "The reason is simple," says the critic, Keith Nelson: "If it is hard to say exactly what the values are, it is easy to say what they are not, and Robert Cohn embodies the old, false, 'romantic' values that Hemingway is reacting against."⁸⁵

At first, Jake feels that Cohn is both "nice and awful," but tolerates and pities him as a case of "arrested development." By the

⁸⁵Keith Neilson, The Sun Also Rises: A Critical Evaluation, p. 6339.

end of the book, he thoroughly hates him. Cohn's flaws include a false sense of superiority--reinforced by his pugilistic skills--and a romantic attitude toward himself and his activities that distorts his relationship with everyone around him. To reinforce this false romanticism, Cohn alters reality to suit his preconceptions. Falling "in love" with Brett, he refuses to see her realistically, but idealizes her. When she spends a weekend with him because she thinks it would be "good for him," he treats it as a great affair and demands the "rights" of a serious lover, striking out at all the other men who approach her. In short, Cohn's false perceptions of reality and his self-romanticization underscore his chief fault, the cardinal sin in Hemingway's view. Cohn refuses to pay his bill.⁸⁶

Cohn's romantic self-image is finally destroyed by the book's "exemplar," the bullfighter Pedro Romero. After being introduced to Brett by Jake, Romero becomes enamored of her and they go off together. Affronted that Brett has been "taken" from him, Cohn forces the young man into a prolonged fist-fight. Although totally outmanned as a boxer, Romero refuses to give in to Cohn. After absorbing considerable punishment, Romero, by sheer will, courage, and endurance, rallies to defeat and humiliate his opponent. His romantic bubble deflated, Cohn bursts into tears and fades from the novel. As Keith Neilson puts it:

It is appropriate that Cohn's false values be exposed by Pedro Romero because his example is also central to the educations of both Jake and Brett. As an instinctively great bull-

⁸⁶Carlos Baker, Ernest Hemingway: Critiques of Four Major Novels, p. 18.

fighter, Romero embodies the values in action and especially in the bullring.⁸⁷

Most critics view Robert Cohn as an outsider among the other characters in The Sun Also Rises. That is true because Cohn receives many of his experiences by reading and by vicarious means, rather than by confronting life directly. He does not understand the art of sports as a contest, and learns the art of boxing only to be able to defend himself from various insults. He cannot conduct himself with dignity even in his short-lived love affair with Brett Ashley. He intrudes upon people and places where he is obviously not wanted, and he does not possess the sensitivity to understand the nature of life. James T. Farrell says:

Robert Cohn, however, is an outsider. He is with them because of his doglike love for Lady Brett Ashley. Unlike the others, he is unable to drown his feelings in banalities, small talk, and new spectacles. Cohn's difference from the others is one of the central points of the novel.⁸⁸

Michael Campbell (Mike), Brett's fiance, is a Scotsman with whom Brett is staying. Both are casualties of ordeals similar to those which damaged Jake. Brett has behind her the very unpleasant death of her first fiance, and Mike's character has been shattered by the war. By the end of the novel he has returned to Saint Jean de Luz and Brett has decided to go back to him because, as she tells Jake, he is her own sort.

Bill Gorton, an American friend of Jake, a successful writer and sportsman, is presented in a sterile atmosphere of complete frustra-

⁸⁷Keith Neilson, The Sun Also Rises: A Critical Evaluation, p. 6338.

⁸⁸James T. Farrell, "The Sun Also Rises" in Ernest Hemingway: A Critique of Four Major Novels. Edited by Carlos Baker (New York: Charles Scribner, 1972), p. 6.

tion. He travels around, fishes, drinks, eats and engages in most of the other leisure activities of the lost generation.

Pedro Romero, a promising matador, an incredibly handsome nineteen-year-old, is treasured by Montoya and other aficionados of bullfighting, for he seems to have the spirit of one of the "real ones," the best matadors of all times. Of all the characters in The Sun Also Rises, Romero comes closest to being Hemingway's first "code hero." Romero stands very straight, and his posture reflects his art--pure and classic. He is not afraid in the bullring, for he has mastered the techniques of the cape and the sword, and already he controls the bulls like a master. He does not overemphasize the beauty of his technique, nor does he "fake" danger; he is neither fraud nor show-off. Romero fights the last bullfight of the fiesta with a bruised, sore body, but he performs perfectly. Regardless of what happened the night before--when Cohn beat him--Romero has an obligation to perform to standards he has set for himself, and he does so. His only flaw is a small triangular scar on his cheek-bone, and at the end of the novel, when he leaves Brett, he is still only flawed on the cheek-bone; Brett has not tainted him. In his affair with Brett, he has performed according to his rules: if Brett was to be his woman, she would have to be just that, and that would mean letting her hair grow and acting like a woman, his woman. When he discovered that such ideas were impossible for Brett to accept, he left--as Brett asked him to--and he paid the hotel bill. It is a small matter--this bill-paying--but it is one of the things expected of a man, and Romero performed it. Also, he left Brett without any quarrel; he did not sulk like Cohn or whine like Mike. He proves that he indeed has "the greatness" within the bullring and outside of

it. On the other hand, Romero also represents the lost generation, in that he is involved in leisure activities such as bullfighting and casual sexuality.⁸⁹

Some critics feel that characterization in The Sun Also Rises "is neither complex nor superb."⁹⁰ One reviewer who shares this viewpoint says:

Hemingway doesn't fill out his characters and let them stand for themselves; he isolates one or two chief traits which reduce them to caricature. His perception of the physical object is direct and accurate; his vision of character, singularly oblique.⁹¹

Whatever such critics say about his techniques of characterization, it is through it that Hemingway treats the themes he wishes to elaborate in the novel.

Hemingway's style is a large part of his content. What he attempts to communicate is done through his manner of presentation. Through his techniques, he expresses clearly, subtly and concisely what he has seen, heard and felt. Hemingway uses simplified and colloquial syntax and grammar, featured in conversation or dialogue to present his ideas. He has made his unique contribution to modern fiction by establishing and exploring exhaustively the possibilities of simplicity.

The typical sentence in The Sun Also Rises is a simple declarative one, or often two, joined in a compound structure. He avoids the use of

⁸⁹Carlos Baker, Ernest Hemingway: Critique of Four Major Novels, p. 19.

⁹⁰Review of The Sun Also Rises by Ernest Boyd in Dial, 10 January 1927, p. 73.

⁹¹Review of The Sun Also Rises by Allen Tate in Nation, 15 December 1926, p. 642.

subordinate clauses. Some examples occur in the following conversation. When Jake is telling of his fishing trip to Burguete with Bill Gorton, he says: "The cattle were up in the hills. We heard their bells in the woods." (p. 116) It is true that people do sometime take in several facts more or less at once, and that allows Hemingway to extend his sentences so as to include two independent clauses connected by "and," producing the simplest sort of compound sentence. Jake says,

The fields were rolling and grassy and the grass was short from the sheep grazing. It was a beech wood and the trees were very old. Their roots bulked above the ground and the branches were twisted. We walked on the road between the thick old beeches and the sunlight came through the leaves in light patches on the grass. (p. 116-117)

Jake's description of the countryside employs typical compound sentences.

The trees were big, and the foliage was thick, but it was not gloomy. 'This is country,' Bill said. The road went up a hill and we got into thick woods, and the road kept on climbing. The hills ahead were not wooded, and there were great fields of yellow gorse. (p. 117)

In illustrating his simple speech, the totally conventional adjectives "fine," or "nice," or a pleasant "damn good," must serve without distinction for the weather, the whiskey or the emotional life of the two lovers. This is seen in a conversation which includes Brett, Michael and Jake.

'He calls her Circe,' Mike said. 'He claims she turns men into swine. Damn good.' 'I wish I were one of these literary chaps.' 'He'd be good, you know,' Brett said. 'He writes a good letter.' 'I know,' I said. 'He wrote from San Sebastian.' 'That was nothing,' Brett said, 'He can write a damned amusing letter.' (p. 144)

The conversation here illustrates simple speech. The simple adjective "good" is used several times to describe Cohn (an author), a literary

allusion and a letter (without any differentiation). In the final sentence, a substitute, "damned amusing," is used.

Hemingway's reputation as a stylist is based chiefly on his brilliant use of dialogue. Joseph W. Beach comments on the use of conversation in Hemingway's books. He observes that:

There can be no doubt that for many readers of sensitive taste he gets his effects. One reason is that he has a faculty for arranging the plainest words so as to give them the expressive accent of natural speech. This is particularly notable in his dialogue. On the surface the talk of his people is often trivial enough in matter and sentiment; but somehow he conjures up by repetition of apparently insignificant remarks, a feeling of tension and emotional import which is both dramatic and satisfying to the esthetic sense.⁹²

Many reviewers of The Sun Also Rises have praised Hemingway for his excellent usage of dialogue in that novel. For example, one says

The dialogue is brilliant. If there is better dialogue being written today I do not know where to find it. It is alive with the rhythm and idioms, the pauses and suspensions and innuendoes and shorthands of living speech.⁹³

Another reviewer similarly says:

Written in terse, precise, and aggressively fresh prose, and containing some of the finest dialogue yet written in this country, the story achieves a vividness and a sustained tension that make it unquestionably one of the events of a year rich in interesting books.⁹⁴

Hemingway uses conversation to indicate the discipline that the characters set for themselves. They strive for simplicity in their manner, carriage and speech. They speak in clipped tones and avoid

⁹²Joseph Warren Beach, The Twentieth-Century Novel, p. 533.

⁹³Conrad Aiken, review of The Sun Also Rises in The New York Herald Tribune, 31 October 1926, p. 4.

⁹⁴C. B. Chase, review of The Sun Also Rises in Saturday Review of Literature 3(December 11, 1926):420.

pretentious phrases. They also condense their emotions, and in most cases deliberately suppress them. That tendency is illustrated in The Sun Also Rises when Brett proves to be a woman of honor. Romero is so much in love with her that he asks her to marry him. She realizes that he is much younger than she and determines not to ruin his life. It is a fine occasion for sentimental heroics, but what Hemingway gives us is sufficiently suggested by this fragment of conversation at a bar.⁹⁵ It is Lady Brett talking to Jake: "I just talk around it. You know I feel rather damned good, Jake." "You should." "You know it makes one feel rather good deciding not to be a bitch." "Yes." "It's sort of what we have instead of God." "Some people have God," I said, "Quite a lot." "He never worked very well with me." "Should we have another martini?" (p. 245) Here is all the flatness and yet all the rhythm, too, of Hemingway's famous conversation. Here is the realistic yet mannered effect, the same tense and unliterary tone. The general atmosphere is one of played down or muted tension. The method used here is itself perfectly expressive of the message. Life, which is the material, must be constantly kept simple and held under the most vigorous control, for it is savage and can get out of hand.

The conversational style, which gives us the illusion that Jake is just telling us the story of what he has been doing lately, gracefully hides the fact that the pace is carefully calculated and swift, the sentences and scenes hard and clean. This is true of the over-all structure, too: the book is informal and relaxed only on the surface, and beneath it lies a scrupulous and satisfying orchestration.⁹⁶

⁹⁵Philip Young, Ernest Hemingway (New York: Rinehart and Co., Inc., 1952), p. 58.

⁹⁶Ibid.

Hemingway also uses the first-person narrator technique in this novel. Since Jake Barnes is the narrator, it is primarily "through his responses that the diastolic action is to be seen."⁹⁷

Hemingway's style is the perfect voice of his content. He writes as his characters must live, with simplicity and discipline. The simplicity of diction and sentence structure are appropriate to the meaning of much that his "primitive" characters have to say. This technique fits perfectly his protagonist's desires to be simple and whole--to feel, but not to think. His style as well as the content of his novel are an integral part of his ideas.⁹⁸

Critical reception of The Sun Also Rises, both contemporary and subsequent, reveals that many critics reviewed it positively, although a few reviewers saw the characters as shallow and hence insisted that Hemingway's vision of character is "oblique." Generally, critics credit The Sun Also Rises for its vigorous style and unillusioned ideas.

William Faulkner is the next author for study in this chapter. He was born on September 25, 1897, in New Albany, Mississippi. Faulkner grew up in Oxford, Mississippi, and there attended public schools. In 1918 he enlisted in the Canadian branch of the Royal Air Force. After World War I he studied at the University of Mississippi at Oxford. Faulkner wrote numerous works, including novels; this discussion, however, is limited to the most important novels. In New Orleans he made

⁹⁷Chaman Nahal, The Narrative Pattern in Ernest Hemingway's Fiction (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1971), pp. 32-33.

⁹⁸Philip Young, Ernest Hemingway, p. 58.

the acquaintance of the novelist Sherwood Anderson, who made possible the publication of Faulkner's first novel, Soldier's Pay (1926).

Soldier's Pay describes the inability of the lost generation to adjust to the ways of civilian life; the themes of futility and disenchantment are stressed, yet something of Faulkner's transcendentalism finds its first expression in the character of Margaret Powers, a war widow who marries Donald Mahan, a mortally wounded aviator.⁹⁹ Mosquitoes (1927) relates the conversations and adventures, during five days, of a group of New Orleans aesthetes aboard a luxurious yacht which is disabled in a swamp among the gnats. The talk ranges from sophisticated gossip to wisdom, most of it in the tradition of Bohemianism. Another Faulkner work worthy of mention here is Flags in the Dust, the longer, earlier version of Sartoris. It provides a fascinating opportunity to read a Faulkner novel in two versions, the second of which Viking asked that he prepare as a condition for its publication.¹⁰⁰

Sartoris (1929) chronicles the life of an aristocratic family of that name in the imaginary town of Jefferson, Mississippi, during the era after the Civil War. The Snopes family begins to elbow its way into leadership as the older families show marks of deterioration; the theme of the decadence of southern aristocracy now overshadows in Faulkner's fiction the theme of futility. The characters in this novel reappear in

⁹⁹Edmond L. Volpe, A Readers Guide to William Faulkner (New York: Octagon Books, 1981), p. 2558.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

other books, and many of the incidents here treated briefly are developed more fully in later short stories and novels.¹⁰¹

The Sound and the Fury (1929) employs the technique of stream-of-consciousness--interior monologue, free association, and shifting sequence of time and place--to reproduce the private worlds of degenerate members of the Compson family.¹⁰²

As I Lay Dying (1930) is a tragic story of the Bundrens, a family of Mississippi mountaineers who become degraded and sordid through poverty and ignorance. The main episode concerns a thirty-mile march by the family with the corpse of the mother; strange and horrifying events occur along the way. Degeneration and deterioration of the human being seem to have reached another limit, not so much because these people are willfully perverse as because they lack almost every dignifying thought and action prescribed by social custom.¹⁰³

Sanctuary (1931) was partly written to shock the American public into buying this book; to achieve that purpose Faulkner invented "the most horrific tale he could imagine." Murder, rape, lynching and other forms of violence emphasize the degeneracy of which mankind is capable of.¹⁰⁴ It was originally written as a simple horror story. Then it was

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Cleanth Brooks, R. W. B. Lewis and Robert Penn Warren, eds. American Literature: The Makers and the Making, Volume II (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), p. 2564.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 2563.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

revised into a terrifying study of the breakdown of a spoiled, superficial girl named Temple Drake. Violated by proxy by an inhuman, impotent murderer known as Popeye, she finds "sanctuary" of a sort at a Memphis brothel.

Light in August (1932) deals with the problem of possessing mixed white and Negro blood and with the southern and northern attitudes toward miscegenation. The central character is Joe Christmas, possibly a mulatto, who is white in appearance and who in mature life tries to overcome a sense of racial inferiority by having relations with white women.¹⁰⁵

Absalom, Absalom! (1936) tells the story of a West Virginia mountaineer, Thomas Sutpen, and his ill-fated attempt to find an aristocratic family and home in Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, in the years before the Civil War. His first wife had been a woman of mixed white and Negro blood. His second wife is a white woman. The son of the second marriage murders the son of the first, and Sutpen himself is later murdered by the grandfather of a girl he had seduced. Sutpen's dream of establishing a dynasty ends with his great mansion burnt to the ground and his only surviving descendant a moronic grandson. The story is told by three people--Rosa Coldfield, who relates it to a young friend, Quentin Compson, on the eve of his departure for Harvard in 1909; Quentin's father, who, over a period of years, supplements Rosa's account and completes the story in a letter to Quentin; and, finally,

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 2665.

Quentin himself, who retells the story, adding his own interpretation, to his Harvard roommate. As Quentin interprets the tale, the chronicle of Thomas Sutpen becomes the story of the American South, with its deep and conflicting passions, its tragedy, ruin, and decay. In Absalom, Absalom! Faulkner continued his experimentation with interior monologue, a literary device through which the narrator reveals his own personality. In this case, with three narrators, Faulkner projects three sets of attitudes toward the Sutpen story.¹⁰⁶

Intruder in the Dust (1948) is about the arrest of Lucas Beauchamp, a Negro, for murdering a white man. While a mob assembles, two sixteen-year old boys, one white and one black, and an elderly spinster of excellent family gather evidence to prove the innocence of the imprisoned man. The theme of race relations and the duty of the white man to promote the interest of black people emerge in this novel. It is one of the novels chosen for study in this paper. Its historical setting is the fictional town of Jefferson, in Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, after World War II (1948). As said earlier, on one level the novel deals with the moral coming of age of a sixteen-year-old white boy through his relationship with an old black man whom he helps to prove innocent of murder. On another level the novel makes a statement on the racial problems of the South. These problems, according to Faulkner, must be solved without interference from "outlanders." One of the significant themes in Intruder in the Dust, therefore, is racial

¹⁰⁶Edmond L. Volpe, A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner, p. 2561.

conflict between blacks and whites in the United States, especially in the southern area.¹⁰⁷

The novel opens on a brilliant, cold morning in November when Chick Mallison, twelve years old, accompanied by two black boys, went rabbit-hunting on Carothers Edmonds' place.¹⁰⁸ While hunting, Chick fell through the ice into a creek. Lucas saved Chick's life by providing him food, warmth and shelter. Later, when Chick tried to pay Lucas for his hospitality, the black man spurned his money. Chick brooded over the incident, ashamed to be indebted to a black man, especially one as arrogant as Lucas Beauchamp. When again he tried to repay the old man, Lucas again refused to acknowledge payment and thus to admit his inferiority as a black person. However, Chick's turn to repay (help) Lucas came when Lucas was falsely accused by the whites of murdering a white man, Vinson Gowrie. Chick, with the help of his uncle, a lawyer, proved that the white man Crawford Gowrie had murdered his brother Vinson and that Lucas was innocent. Lucas resolutely pays two dollars to the lawyer to close the matter, and he demands a receipt from him. (p.247)

Coupled with the theme of racial conflict is also the dictum that the South should be left alone to solve its own problems without the interference of the North. Faulkner vividly treats this when he shows

¹⁰⁷Intruder in the Dust, reviewed by an anonymous author in New York Times October 1948, p. 108.

¹⁰⁸William Faulkner, Intruder in the Dust (New York: Vintage Books, 1948), p. 3. Subsequent quotations from this text will be cited from this edition, unless otherwise noted.

Sheriff Hope Hampton and Lawyer Gavin Stevens solving the crime and thus preventing Lucas Beauchamp from being lynched.

Justice is another theme. Justice is done when it is proved that Crawford Gowrie has murdered Vinson. The search for human dignity and the equality of human beings are also themes in Intruder in the Dust. In attempting to pay Lucas for his act of kindness, Chick denies him his humanity. What others often interpret as arrogance is really Lucas' unyielding demand that he be treated as a human being, worthy of respect. Before the publication of this novel, in such works as "The Bear" and Light in August, Faulkner had only hinted at his concept of the racial problem, with the result that his views were often misunderstood; in Intruder in the Dust he set forth his views boldly, often reinforcing them with italics, and using one of his characters as his spokesman. Faulkner's main tenet, developed by Lawyer Gavin Stevens, is that the South must be left alone to solve its own problems, that any interference in the form of federal legislation will only strengthen the South's historic defiance of the North. Intruder in the Dust is a successful novel because Faulkner succeeds in making the reader believe in its central character, understand him and sympathize with him.

Through powerful techniques such as characterization, Charles ("Chick") Mallison symbolizes the role of the new hope of the rising generation in the south. He heeds his uncle's advice: "Some things you must never stop refusing to bear." Chick realizes that the South is a different place where segregation, not enslavement, is the order of the day.

Gavin Stevens is a lawyer and an uncle of Charles Mallison.

Stevens seems to function primarily to help Charles achieve a greater understanding of himself in relation to his community. Stevens speaks of social and political matters concerning the north and south. He speaks of the similarities between the homogeneity of the black and white races. Faulkner seems to use Stevens to expose his own feeling regarding the South:

That's why we (the south) must resist the north; not just to preserve ourselves nor even the two of us as one to remain one nation... but to prove that Sambo (a black person) is a human being living in a free country and hence must be free.
(p. 154-155)

On the other hand, Faulkner seems to depict Stevens as one who defends the Southern tradition against the north, "the area which rushes to elevate the black people's status to that of the whites." (p. 154)

Lucas Beauchamp is a proud man: "I ain't a Edmonds... I belong to the old lot. I'm a McCaslin." (p. 19) Lucas challenges the cultural patterns and the traditions of the South. He is a strong-minded person. He does not ask for pity when he is accused of murder; he remains calm, asking only justice from everyone. Lucas appears as a symbol of justice and as an instrument through which the white man can redeem himself from the evils of slavery and of racial prejudice.

Miss Eunice Habersham, an elderly spinster and a descendant of an old Jefferson family, supports Beauchamp enough to rob a grave to prove his innocence. Had she been less sentimental and more skeptical, Crawford Gowrie, guilty and white, would have escaped. What was the motive of that aged aristocrat in saving Lucas Beauchamp? The story goes far back, to when she was young. Molly Beauchamp (Lucas' wife) was exactly her age, grew up with her and asked that she be godmother to her

(Molly's) oldest child. These relationships gave Miss Habersham her determination to save Lucas from mob violence. Hope Hampton is the Sheriff of Yoknapatawpha County. Prodded and aided by the two boys and Miss Habersham, he solved the murder. Hampton is highly skeptical and totally unsentimental. He seeks justice, not conviction; evidence, not the will of the voters.

Faulkner also uses plot to convey his message in Intruder in the Dust, a plot very simple in structure. Black Lucas Beauchamp is partially descended from the white McCaslin clan. He makes the acquaintance of Charles Mallison when the boy is twelve years old, and soon thereafter saves Charles' life. Four years later, when Lucas is arrested on suspicion of murder, Chick, his black friend, Aleck Sander, and Miss Habersham prove that Lucas is innocent.

Faulkner also utilizes style effectively. For example, Faulknerian syntax in Intruder in the Dust is detailed and involved. Most sentences in this novel are very long, and they give a vivid, detailed and powerful description. However, most of Faulkner's syntax here also remains completely conventional, if elaborate at times, and much less demanding than in The Sound and the Fury. The really difficult passages are limited to the polemics of Stevens. A good example can be seen in the following long, complex, philosophical sentence by Stevens:

Only a few of us know that only from homogeneity comes anything of a people or for a people of durable and lasting value--the literature, the art, the science, that minimum of government and police which is the meaning of freedom and liberty, and perhaps most valuable of all a national character worth anything in a crisis--that crisis we shall face someday when we meet an enemy with as many men as we have and as much material as we have and--who knows?--who can even brag and boast as we brag and boast. (p. 154)

In this very long sentence, Faulkner through Stevens speaks of political matters concerning the North and South. He says that people from the Southern United States remain homogeneous, and, later, maintains a resulting idea: "That's why we must resist the North, to prove that the Negro is a human being living in a free country and hence must be free." (p. 154)

Faulknerian dialogue, including black dialect, is also utilized. In the dialogue between Beauchamp and Stevens, the former speaks in black dialect and the latter in "Standard English."

'I aint much of a visiting man,' he (Lucas) said.
 'You were not much of a hanging man either,' his (Charles') uncle said. 'But you don't need me to tell you how close you came.'
 'No,' Lucas said. 'I don't reckon I do. What do you want me to tell her?'
 'You can't,' his uncle said. 'You don't know how to say thank you. I've got that fixed too. Take her some flowers.'
 'Flowers?' Lucas said. 'I aint had no flowers to speak of since Molly died.' (pp. 241-42)

In the above sentences one can see Lucas' use of forms like 'aint' and 'aint had no flowers.' This kind of dialogue gives us a variety of speech and adds interest to the book. It is also realistic, given the characters and the times.

Intruder in the Dust is a relatively straightforward narration. It blends folklore and parable with a formula mystery story, striking a much simpler note than most of Faulkner's work. Aspects of folklore permeate Intruder in the Dust; as one critic puts it:

Faulkner's panorama of rural local color includes a generous sampling of cracker-barrel philosophers, bigoted rednecks, mischievous, shoeless youngsters, and fading ladies of breeding long past their prime. The plot crackles with

anecdotes, bits of country wisdom, humor, and superstition.¹⁰⁹

By folklore here one refers to the established traditions of the people Faulkner describes, one of which is that of racial prejudice against blacks in the United States. Faulkner develops Chick Mallison as a white character who is opposed to the prejudices and narrow views of the environment where he resides. Faulkner makes young Chick, at an early age, an individual within his environment and community.

...he (Chick) seemed to see his whole native land, his home--the dirt, the earth which had bred his bones and those of his fathers for six generations and was still shaping him into not just a man but a specific man, not with just a man's passions and aspirations and beliefs but the specific passions and hopes and convictions and ways of thinking and acting of a specific kind and even race: and even more: even among a kind and race specific and unique (according to the lights of most, certainly of all of them who thronged into town this morning to stand across the street from the jail and crowd up around the sheriff's car, damned unique)... (p. 151)

The novel also contains several parables, one of which is a Southern version of the Biblical Cain and Abel story. The brothers Vinson and Crawford Gowrie have joined forces in several business ventures, including timber dealing. Crawford steals timber from his brother and sells it to the shady Jake Montgomery. When Lucas Beauchamp sees Crawford stealing the timber and threatens to expose him, Crawford kills his brother in a way to make Lucas appear to be the murderer. Crawford relies on the townspeople's readiness to blame a black man for the murder of a white man. But Crawford learns too late that violence, instead of eradicating problems, creates more violence, and eventually,

¹⁰⁹Orville Prescott, Review of Intruder in the Dust, Time, 4 October 1948, p. 108.

one's downfall. Truth simply will not stay buried, Faulkner seems to be saying:

In a hair-raising midnight scene combining the best of Edgar Allan Poe and Raymond Chandler, plus his own inimitable sense of place and wry humor, the author has three very frightened individuals uncover the truth that frees Lucas.¹¹⁰

Beyond the Cain and Abel story, Gavin Stevens' speeches expand Intruder in the Dust into a parable about the people's right to govern themselves. While Stevens' rhetoric may appear to be the propaganda of an unfeeling and aristocratic bigot, his pleading should not be discounted. The intruder of the title may refer not only to those who open Vinson Gowrie's grave, but also to "outlanders" who would dictate moral action to these people. With their own sense of justice, the whites come to realize that Beauchamp could have had little to do with what is fundamentally a family feud. Because of his cruel victimization, Lucas in the future will be shown innumerable courtesies by white people. The true villains here are the poor whites, those who have perverted the opportunities of their position.

The novel also becomes a highly suspenseful mystery toward the end, with Sheriff Hampton and Lawyer Stevens solving the crime in barely enough time to prevent Lucas Beauchamp from being lynched by a mob far more interested in violence than justice.

Thus, through powerful techniques, Faulkner presents his views in Intruder in the Dust. On the one hand, its meaning seems to lie in the legal process which Faulkner lays out in determining guilt or innocence.

¹¹⁰Anonymous reviewer of Intruder in the Dust, Library Journal 73(August 1948):1089.

Regarding Lucas Beauchamp, the community feels that he is guilty solely because he is a black who has been found standing over the body of a murdered white man. Secondly, the novel speaks to the reader concerning the execution of law and justice. For example, the community threatens to lynch innocent Lucas; however, through the justice of the law, he is proven innocent and hence not lynched. Finally, Lucas is a champion of truth and dignity. He challenges the cultural patterns and the traditions of the south. With extreme skill, Faulkner has utilized the obscene brutality of a threatened lynching, a communal crime which is aborted, as a metaphor for the changed epoch which he sees as possible for the south.

Critical reception of Intruder in the Dust can be divided into contemporary and subsequent reception. When the novel was first published, it received much praise. For example, one critic had this to say: "Intruder in the Dust is a powerful and fascinating story, richly creating place, character, and race."¹¹¹ Another reviewer said:

Read as a statement of Faulkner's beliefs or as another vivid episode in his legend of Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, or as the work of a novelist of recognized virtuosity, this is an important book in a major literary career.¹¹²

Many critics agree on the importance of Intruder in the Dust, some because "it primarily explores the relationship between black and white attitudes in the south."¹¹³

¹¹¹Horace Reynolds, review of Intruder in the Dust, Christian Science Monitor, 7 October 1948, p. 11.

¹¹²H. W. Hart, review of Intruder in the Dust, Library Journal 73(August 1948):1089.

¹¹³Boyd Minner, Jr., "The Significance of Intruder in the Dust in Relation to Sartoris, The Sound and the Fury, and Absalom, Absalom!"

Some of the later critics negatively assess Intruder in the Dust because of its style. For example, one asserts that it has an "incoherent style."¹¹⁴ This critic further asserts that the plot of a good detective story must justify its complications, and that Intruder in the Dust (which is a detective-story novel) scarcely does so. Another unsparing critic says: "It is marred by too many propagandistic preachments placed in the mouth of that familiar all-purpose heavy-duty character named Gavin Stevens."¹¹⁵

Nonetheless, since its merits are greater than its faults, Intruder in the Dust is appropriately chosen for study in this paper. Because it includes Gavin Stevens' philosophical discourses on the South's ability to handle its own problems after the action has essentially been resolved, this novel is too often dismissed as a distasteful polemic, a lapse in Faulkner's series of brilliant novels. Yet Intruder in the Dust is not so much inferior to such works as The Sound and the Fury or Absalom, Absalom! as it is different in its approach to the genre. Always an experimenter and innovator, here Faulkner turned with considerable success to establishing his vision in formula fiction. Intruder in the Dust does present the famous Faulkner world in a form understandable to many readers.¹¹⁶

The next chapter is a discussion of the four novels treated in this study which were published in the period 1951-1959.

¹¹⁴Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha County (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 280.

¹¹⁵Lawrence Thompson, William Faulkner: An Introduction and Interpretation (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1963), p. 13.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*

CHAPTER FIVE

CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF THE SELECTED NOVELS, 1951-1959

This chapter concentrates on analyses of the four most recent novels included in this study (published from 1951 to 1959) in the chronological order of their publication. The same novelistic elements found in all four of these works will be treated in the same sequential order for each novel.

J. D. Salinger (1919-) is the first author included in this chapter and his novel, The Catcher in the Rye (1957), is the study text. Knowledge of some of the biographical details of this novelist is useful in the study of his fiction.

Salinger was born in 1919 to a well-to-do merchant family in New York City. An average student with an average I.Q., Salinger attended both public and private schools in Manhattan before entering a military academy in Pennsylvania. After putting in his time there, he spent less than a month at New York University. He completed his academic career by taking a short story course at Columbia University. That course, given by the editor of Story magazine, resulted in the publication of his first short story in that magazine in 1940.

Drafted in 1942, Salinger spent the next four years in the Army. Apparently, while in the service he never stopped writing, and he was alert to the artistic possibilities of his experiences, for many of them

turn up in one form or another in his later stories. He returned to New York in 1946 after a brief marriage to a European woman with whom he claimed a telepathic affinity.

Writing soon preoccupied him to the exclusion of everything else, and he left the distracting life of New York City, going first to Tarrytown, New York, and then, after the publication of The Catcher in the Rye, to Cornish, New Hampshire. Salinger then was able to devote himself entirely to writing. Since 1951 he has produced a number of fine short stories and novelettes, most of which are concerned with developing the myth of the Glass family. The short stories were published in book form, with Franny and Zooey appearing in 1961 and Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters, and Seymour, An Introduction in 1963.

"What is so important about the facts of Salinger's life?," one may ask, especially as so few of them are available. Certainly his work stands or falls on its own merits.

But the mystique surrounding his life is elaborated because he is at once the most artistically established young American writer and the one about whom the public knows the least. Unlike Hemingway, whom Salinger met during his military sojourn--Hemingway thought he had a 'helluva' talent--Salinger does not have an affinity for dramatic experience.¹

He is not an activist living openly in the public eye; he is a practitioner of the cult of secrecy. However, some of the details known about his life often have a fictional counterpart in his works. For example, both Salinger and his creation, Holden Caulfield, attended

¹Charlotte Alexander, J. D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye" (New York: Monarch Press, 1965), p. 7.

preparatory schools and were members of the fencing team (although Holden is merely the team's manager). During the preparatory school careers of both Salinger and Holden, a suicide and the nervous breakdown of a fellow student occur. Salinger's best stories concern the trials, aspirations, frustrations and occasional successes of the nine members of the Glass family: an Irish mother and a Jewish father (former vaudeville performers) and their seven eccentric, charming, perceptive and neurotic children. The younger generation of the Glass family are richly individualistic and exemplars of Salinger's ideas on the achievement of full intellectual and spiritual development in a brutal and usually venal world. By no accident, they are half-Irish and half-Jewish, and the genius Seymour Glass has also studied oriental religion (Buddhism) in depth.

When we turn to the Glass family, we find that the father is Jewish and the mother Christian, the same religious affiliations as those of Salinger's own parents. Thus the students' biographical examination of Salinger is not without relevance, for it illuminates some of the techniques by which Salinger's experiences are transformed into work of art.²

In the late 1940's and the early 1950's, while the pieces from Nine Stories were being published separately, Salinger was undoubtedly trying to work into a novel his earlier stories about Holden Caulfield. (In 1946, for instance, a novelette about Holden had been accepted for publication, then was withdrawn by Salinger.)³ The Catcher in the Rye became, upon publication in 1951, an almost immediate success.

²Ibid., p. 8.

³Ibid.

As a midsummer Book-of-the-Month Club Selection, for example, it certainly exposed Salinger to a larger audience than he had hitherto enjoyed, if, indeed, 'enjoyed' is the proper word, since the degree of popularity was enough to disturb Salinger, who directed that his picture be removed from the third and subsequent issuings of the book. He remarked later to a friend that 'I feel tremendously relieved that the season for success for The Catcher in the Rye is nearly over. I enjoyed a small part of it, but most of it I found hectic and professionally and personally demoralizing.' Reviews of the novel were mixed, from out-and-out approval to questions about Salinger's attitudes, the colloquial style, the focus on an adolescent boy, and of course, the issue that has since attracted attention--whether the book was fit for young readers. Thus, The Catcher in the Rye, especially since its issuance as a paperback in 1953, has been curiously both stipulated for and banned from high school and college reading lists.⁴

Various themes are treated in The Catcher in the Rye, one of which is urban life. Holden Caulfield, a sixteen-year-old boy who has just flunked out of his third preparatory school and is unwilling to remain at school until the end of the term, runs away to New York City. There he does not contact his parents, but drifts around the city for two days. The bulk of the novel is an account, both hilarious and moving, of Holden's adventures in Manhattan. These include disillusioning encounters with two nuns, a suave ex-schoolmate, a prostitute named Sunny and a sympathetic former teacher who may be homosexual. Thus the urban life in The Catcher in the Rye reflects the realities of city life. As an adolescent in the big city of New York, Holden desires acceptance into the adult world even though he is highly aware of its phoniness. He also discovers the materialistic adult world of the city.

Sex is a theme in The Catcher in the Rye. The only common ground found between Carl Luce and Holden is their agreement that sex is both a

⁴Ibid., p. 9.

physical and a spiritual experience. Carl Luce is both almost unendurably pretentious and tensely self-involved. He condescends to Holden (who deeply irritates him) throughout their conversation, and of course objects to Holden's distrust of his obviously exploitative liaison with a Chinese sculptress, who is herself exploiting him. This sequence is interesting, for it is a powerful satire.

Another theme is the crisis of adolescence. Carl advises Holden to undergo psychoanalysis; this is a foreshadowing of Holden's real needs. Carl informs Holden that he himself does not need analysis because he has adjusted to life through his father's advice. Holden proceeds to punish himself--in response to amorphous guilt feelings--by getting drunk. In his musings concerning guilt and sadness, he arrives again at thoughts concerning Allie's death. (Allie was Holden's brother who died of leukemia July 18, 1946. He was two years younger than Holden.) (p. 38) The crisis of adolescence is the overriding theme of The Catcher in the Rye: the difficulty of growing up, the lonely and arduous voyage from innocence to experience, is what Salinger explores.

As a school dropout, Caulfield is in search of self-understanding and a meaning for his life. His misadventures in New York City are comic on the surface, but agonizing for Holden. In the end he learns to face the ugliness in life and the weakness in himself. Finally, drawing on his affection for his ten-year-old sister, Phoebe, Holden abandons his spree and returns home.

Salinger's depiction of Holden is considered one of the most convincing portrayals of an adolescent in literature.⁵ Intelligent, sensitive, imaginative, Holden desires acceptance into the adult world despite his reservations about it. His cynicism is vividly evident when he speaks of his school, Pencey Prep, as a school which advertises falsely both its academic and social advantages. (p. 2) Yet, for all his surface toughness, Holden is painfully idealistic and longs for a moral purpose in life. He tells Phoebe that he wants to be "The Catcher in the Rye"--the defender of childhood innocence--who would stand in a field of rye where thousands of children are playing and catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff. (p. 173)

Interplay between life and art is one of the themes in The Catcher in the Rye. That means that Salinger draws heavily upon his own life in the novel, drawing extensively upon his immediate experience, keeping mostly very close indeed to actual persons, places, and ideas, using relatively simple devices to disguise them. Even the more interesting confession that his own childhood had a good deal in common with that of Holden Caulfield takes us hardly any further. "Not memories as such, but the transmutation of memories by the imagination, is what the writer offers to the reader."⁶

Salinger also addresses the author's task. He presents this through Holden, whose conception of what constitutes great literature is

⁵Ibid.

⁶Kenneth Hamilton, J. D. Salinger: A Critical Essay (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdman's Press, 1967), p. 15.

an interesting one: that a great book will cause the reader to wish that he could telephone the author and talk to him. (p. 18)

Salinger also criticizes the system of education in the United States in particular and, perhaps, in the world at large. He does so by giving certain theories of education through Holden. Holden tries to explain to Mr. Antolini (Holden's English teacher at Elkton Hills School) why he failed school. (p. 180) Emerging from his almost incoherent discourse is his distaste for arbitrary rules. Mr. Antolini argues that there must be some order, that there is a time and a place for everything, but Holden points out that sometimes the realization of just what interests a person is born when that person is talking about something else entirely. Such an approach to the positive through the negative shows Holden's acute perception. He concludes that the speech teacher, Mr. Vinson, was very intelligent, but was not possessed with "much brains." The thesis is, of course, that wisdom is superior to mere intelligence; wisdom is the use and application of intelligence in a compassionate manner. Thus is summed up a major portion of Holden's problems at school. He believes that wisdom is--or should be--the school's primary concern. Knowledge should make one happier and wiser; however, the information he received at school did not make Holden happier and was, therefore, not knowledge in its truest sense.⁷

Another significant theme is that of the concepts and criticisms of religion. In the increasing seriousness of his reflections, Holden ponders religion. He evinces a pragmatic bent in such matters; his

⁷Ibid.

value judgments of the disciples are made from a strictly twentieth-century point of view. Christ is accepted by Holden as a pure ideal, but the lesser representatives of Christianity embody, as Holden sees them, the frail human element that corrupts.⁸ Thus, the disciples are harsher judges of their fellow man than God would be. (pp. 99-100)

Finally, Salinger's criticism of materialistic preoccupations in American culture is revealed through the novel, for it is found that Holden is not afflicted with pride in material possessions; the philosophy of conspicuous consumption means nothing to him. He tells us of the time when he was embarrassed because his suitcases were much newer and costlier than his roommate's. Displaying his characteristic empathy, Holden tried to hide his suitcases in consideration of his roommate's feelings. That thoughtful act did not achieve its desired effect, however, because his roommate wanted the suitcases to be seen, so that it would appear as though he owned them. The simple episode illustrates the entire process of jockeying for a superior material image in American society. It is not necessary actually to own things; the appearance of ownership suffices. As one critic says,

At about the time that Salinger was writing The Catcher in the Rye, people who could not afford Cadillacs (the status symbol par excellence) were buying tail fins to make their Chevrolets look like Cadillacs; people who did not own television sets were putting dummy television antennas on their roofs.⁹

Salinger expresses his view of the society's preoccupation with material things through his almost naturalistic use of detail. Some of

⁸Ibid., pp. 16-17.

⁹Charlotte Alexander, J. D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye," p. 33.

the things he mentions are Kleenex, cigarettes, ashtrays, telephones, convertibles, long, sleek, shiny Cadillacs, camel's-hair coats, nail lacquer, diamond rings, cameo brooches, silk dresses and long white dressing gowns. Whenever these "things" are mentioned or used in their respective stories, Salinger is pointing an accusing finger at those who have misplaced values, those who are neglecting the more meaningful aspects of existence for a status symbol or a material luxury.

The significant themes in The Catcher in the Rye are treated through the use of powerful techniques, through expert handling of detail and dialogue and through vigorous reconstructing of a language which is peculiar to the twentieth century. The next few paragraphs will show that the real achievement in Salinger's fiction rests not with his ribald attacks on the order of things, but with the manner in which they are developed.

Characterization is one of the powerful ways through which Salinger depicts his ideas. Holden Caulfield is the central character and the sole source of information for the events in the book. We learn everything only as it comes through Holden, the narrator and protagonist. In general, Holden's environment can be considered unstable and superficial. He rejects the traditions of school because they are artificial, lacking depth and warmth. His loneliness and rebellion come from his passive rejection of the false conventions and materialistic values that surround him. Because Holden fails in school, uses vulgar expressions, gets drunk and is very interested in sex, he may appear to have low moral standards. Although these common adolescent characteristics may not fit an idealistic conception of a teenager, Holden represents the lonely American youth seeking to establish a moral code

based on transcendent values. His wealthy background, however, allows him to skip over all the middle-class, materialistic concerns of our society. His ambition to be the "catcher in the rye" symbolizes his desire to establish a moral order. Humorous as well as honest, but by no means perfect, Holden searches for some purposeful relationship, but he is not yet prepared for an adult role in society.

Holden's interest in everything stems from his youthful search for experience and freedom. That general, but still undefined, interest in things demonstrates his undeveloped sensibilities. It is important to realize that other characters can be seen and understood only through the hero's sensibility. That is, Holden's consciousness is the consciousness of the entire novel. Other characters emerge only as they are mirrored in this consciousness. On the surface, we know only what Holden tells us about these people.

Thus an understanding of The Catcher in the Rye must begin with Holden Caulfield, who is the catcher, the narrator, the protagonist and the reality of the novel. Salinger's characterization of Holden has led to the author's being classified as a satirist and a social critic. Thus Salinger, though not so vehemently a satirist as Jonathan Swift, freely castigates society through his hero. Holden's protests extend beyond the social and academic life around him, for he finds that the adult world is little better. He suffers owing to the preoccupation of adults with material things, rather than with the feelings of one person for another.

The critic Peter J. Seng says that "What disturbs Holden about the world is adults and adult values." He sees that the world belongs to adults, and it seems to him that they have it filled with phoniness,

pretense, and social compromise. Holden would prefer a world that is honest, sincere and simple. He is looking for "the simple truth."¹⁰

In the final analysis, Holden's criticism does not rest solely with a world that bulges with phonies and pretense so much as it rests with man's dilemma. Holden, too, is caught in that adolescent "twilight zone" between the past security of childhood and the inevitable steps of growing up, growing old and, somewhere in the maturing process, facing eventual death. He is not only repulsed by the social forces brought to bear upon the adults of this world, but depressed by the physical deterioration that comes with age. He sees Mr. Spencer, his history teacher, as a senile man who causes one to wonder as to the current and continuing purpose of his (Mr. Spencer's) life. Holden finds his teacher's appearance, as well as his physical surroundings in his room, unpleasant, with medicines and pills scattered all over and a distinct flavor of Vicks nose drops permeating everything. These thoughts indicate Holden's developing sense of or coming to grips with reality, that is, growing up, assuming responsibility, growing old and, somewhere deep inside, confronting the certainty of dying. This is the knowledge with which Holden cannot cope. It can be concluded that Holden Caulfield is protesting against the order of things in society. The protest is against academic, religious, moral and social conformity.¹¹

¹⁰Peter J. Seng, "The Fallen Idol: The Immature World of Holden Caulfield," College English 33 (December 1961):205.

¹¹Charlotte Alexander, J. D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye," pp. 63-64.

Mr. Spencer yearns to be sympathetic, but fails. He represents an older generation of sweet, but befuddled, teachers who have lost contact with the realities of life. In Holden's eyes Mr. Spencer would be classed as a nice, but depressing, person. His genuineness as a person, however, can be seen beneath his fumbling ways. The Indian blanket that he and his wife bought on a vacation symbolizes his sincere, but simple, delights and shows his honest, but incommunicable, love of history and culture.¹²

Mr. Antolini is a younger man who has left the Elkton Hills School to teach at New York University. He is more articulate than Spencer, and thus is able to communicate a good deal with Holden. He shows the boy how even idealism can be put to constructive, rather than self-destructive, use and how necessary it eventually becomes to reach some compromise with the rest of the world, however vulgar it seems, and to establish some order within oneself. It is one of Holden's more significant lessons that, though Mr. Antolini may not be perfect, he can be helpful. Thus, this teacher weakens Holden's tenacious grip on the reasoning that often results either in a paralysis of action or in escapism.¹³

Phoebe Caulfield is the sister of the protagonist. She epitomizes the child-prodigy type that Salinger so frequently creates. Her childish whimsy is mixed with serious perceptions that force Holden to reevaluate his actions and probe his conscience. Phoebe receives

¹²Ibid., p. 65.

¹³Ibid.

Holden's full esteem, for she represents the continued flow of children who must be cared for, forwarding the life-process that is man's responsibility. Her unselfishness stems from a basic innocence which Holden understands, but which overwhelms him.¹⁴

Robert Ackley is neither ambitious nor generous. Rather, Ackley is an unfriendly, unsophisticated youth who reacts with defensive scorn because he does not fit into society. His reaction to alienation contrasts with Holden's. The apathy and cynicism he expresses cover up "his deep resentment at his rejection by society." His character is drawn to perfection by Salinger.¹⁵

In Allie Caulfield Salinger creates another off-stage prodigy. He is another of the near-perfect, precocious young people who populate Salinger's fiction. He functions almost as an alter ego for Holden, who refers everything to him. Allie's death should be mentioned here, as well as his contrast with Holden's gifted but already partly corrupt and disturbed older brother, D. B., whose full name is never provided.¹⁶ Salinger helps to win affection for Holden by causing him to understand fully the grief of his mother for Allie and to fear that she will become hysterical in her frantic concern for himself when she learns that once again he has failed to perform well academically.

Ward Stradlater, Holden's current roommate, suggests all the qualities in American society that Holden despises, from the exaggerated

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

value given of athletic ability and a masculine parade of virility to personal egotism, superficial, even callous, thinking, worship of materialism and amoral ethical positions. Stradlater, nevertheless, is popular, successful with girls, a leader of boys; he is not, however, a person to be looked up to according to the more subtle but more desirable standards Salinger details in his writings.¹⁷

Finally, there is the character Sally Hayes, a girl with whom Holden has a date. For the most part, she is representative of the wealthy, superficial world of Holden's own background. Through knowing her he has learned how to distinguish a surface knowledge and culture from true depth and understanding. Certainly he is not able to communicate to Sally any of his deepest problems.

Plot is also important as a technique. The incidents which compose the plot follow a set pattern. The purpose of each is to reveal Holden's rigid and peculiar point of view by presenting him with situations in which he is unable either to adjust or to communicate. For example,

in the hotel he notices, across the air-shaft, adults acting 'filthy.' One couple is spraying water in one another's faces. This is the hotel where he meets the prostitute. She is sent to his room with the agreement that it will cost him five dollars. The bellhop demands ten dollars. Holden allows himself to be beaten, rather than pay, because the agreement was five dollars, and he intends to hold rigidly to the prior agreement.¹⁸

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Robert G. Jacobs, "J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye: Holden Caulfield's Goddam Autobiography," Iowa English Yearbook (Fall, 1959):9.

There is no suspense involved in the plot-structure. A plot summary of this novel is particularly difficult to make meaningful, because the book is episodic in character. In its overall structure, it is a first-person narration in the form of a "confession," such as a patient's oral statement to his psychoanalyst. The whole novel is a "flashback" filled with digressions and character-revealing asides. What is vital is not the action itself, but the varied psychological states of the narrator, an emotionally disturbed sixteen-year old boy. A plot summary cannot possibly recreate the detail, the language, or the effect of the original; it can only restate the superficialities of the action.

Salinger also uses a powerful style in The Catcher in the Rye which includes: diction, dialogue, first-person narrative, everyday vernacular speech and, finally, teenage language--informal, colloquial speech.

Much of Salinger's effectiveness in pointing out the ugly anomalies of society in The Catcher in the Rye is a result of the carefully constructed, everyday, vernacular speech used by Holden. The familiar tone which he uses makes the reader feel that he is an old acquaintance of Holden's and can thus take his criticisms without feeling offended. One also needs to mention that there is a profound linkage between Salinger's themes and Holden's language. To create his novelistic effects, Salinger permits Holden to use irregular syntactic forms, "erroneous" grammar, slang, colloquialisms and even fairly frequent and vigorous profanity, as pointed out earlier, but will also have Holden quote others verbatim and at length.

An element of prime importance to the effect that this novel has on the reader is the fact that it is told in the first person. The use of this method of telling a story is powerful. For example, because Holden

is allowed to relate his own story in and on his own terms, we feel an empathy for him that could not have been otherwise achieved. The reader is granted an introspective view of the story; at the same time, because his background is not the same as Holden's, the reader retains his objectivity. Thus, he learns more about Holden than Holden himself knows.

In his essay Donald Costello emphasizes that the personal idiosyncrasies of Holden's speech are in

...keeping with the general teenage language... an artistic rendering of a type of informal colloquial teenage American speech. It is strongly typical and trite, yet often somewhat individual; it is crude and slangy and imprecise, imitative yet occasionally imaginative, and affected towards standardization by the strong efforts of schools.¹⁹

The reason for this is to point out American preoccupation with material "things." One example of this is observed in Holden's description of the loud cheer raised for the wealthy chief patron of the school, who visits it and delivers a banal speech. "...he came up to school in this big goddam Cadillac, and we all had to stand up in the grandstand and give him a locomotive--that's a cheer." (p. 16) The colloquial language and slang serve to heighten the characterization of Holden Caulfield, as well as to control the pace of the novel. Holden's off-hand speech serves to demonstrate his inarticulate, yet rebellious, personality. He uses the same word in many different contexts to force the reader to pay close attention in order to appreciate the exact shades of meaning Holden intends.

¹⁹Donald Costello, "The Language of The Catcher in the Rye," American Speech 34(October 1959):181.

Symbolism is yet another technique used in The Catcher in the Rye. The three most important symbols are the song by Robert Burns, the red hunting hat, and the sports imagery, which appears throughout. The title (from Robert Burns' song "If a body meet a body coming through the rye," which Holden reads in a faulty manner: "if a body catch a body coming through the rye!"), (p. 173), which comes from a mishearing of the song, indicates Holden's great desire to have a transcendent moral purpose, to save children from any loss of innocence. Linked with the song-title is the cap worn, which is the distinctive apparel of a baseball catcher. Holden's inversion of the distinctive peaked cap, also a symbol of man as the perennial hunter, indicates that Salinger sees the hunting instinct in a different manner now. Salinger presents Holden as a spiritual hunter of both adults and children. The red and black hunting hat becomes vital for both him and the child Phoebe, who herself handles it at one point near the close. Man's struggle is elevated to the level of a moral quest. The two-toned hat links Holden with the tradition of the hunter, but Holden's passivity obviously makes him a new kind of hunter. The hunting hat is also linked to the general game and sport imagery in the novel. How you play the game, or whether you play the game, indicates your attitude to life. Holden, the reformer as well as the rebel, wants to make the rules more human, more acceptable to man.²⁰

To sum up both themes and techniques of The Catcher in the Rye, it may be said that through them Salinger has written an absorbing novel.

²⁰Charlotte Alexander, J. D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye" p. 9.

His depiction of Holden is considered one of the most convincing portrayals of an adolescent in literature.²¹ Intelligent, sensitive, imaginative, Holden desires acceptance into the adult world even though he is highly aware of its "phoniness."

The Catcher in the Rye received widespread critical acclaim and has continued to be especially popular among high school and college students, who seem to find Holden Caulfield a spokesman for their own attitudes and ambitions. One critic applauds the novel for its "dramatic and melodramatic"²² style. Another says that the final scene in The Catcher in the Rye, as well as other episodes in that novel, "are very good indeed."²³ Many other critics shared those views, although some negatively criticized it for its usage of coarse language. More and more critical works on The Catcher in the Rye appeared as time went by. These include one critic who credits the novel for its symbolic usage.²⁴ Another says that the novel will endure because it has life and because it is a significantly original work, full of insights into at least the particular truths of Holden's existence. He further asserts that "Salinger's small book is an extraordinary achievement."²⁵

²¹Ibid.

²²Paul Engle, Review of The Catcher in the Rye, Chicago Sunday Tribune, 15 July 1951, p. 3.

²³A. L., Review of The Catcher in the Rye, New Republic 16, July 1951, p. 20.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Clinton W. Trowbridge, "The Symbolic Structure of The Catcher in the Rye," Swanee Review LXXIV (1974:681-693).

Finally, as another critic asserts,

When The Catcher in the Rye made its appearance, J. D. Salinger was heralded as the spokesman of a new generation, speaking more magic to the young than any other U.S. writer since World War II.²⁶

In the following section themes and techniques of Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man will be discussed. First, some details of the life history of Ellison are essential. Ellison (1914-) is a black American novelist and essayist and one of today's greatest novelists. He was born March 1, 1914 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He majored in music at Tuskegee Institute from 1933 to 1936 and then worked as a jazz musician before coming to New York in the late 1930's to pursue a career in sculpture.

In 1939 he began writing seriously with the New York Federal Writer's Project. In 1942 he edited The Negro Quarterly. After the publication of Invisible Man (1952), his novel chosen for study in the course, and the winning of the National Book Award in 1953, Ellison came to be perhaps the most honored of black writers, being awarded a long series of honorary degrees and appointments to professorships at such schools as the University of California, Rutgers and Yale. The novel received also the Russwurm Award, and it stands now as the preeminent American novel of today. Its historical setting is the late 1930's in a small city in the South and in New York City. Using the history of black people in the United States as his basis, Ellison, more than any

²⁶Jonathan Baumbach, "The Saint as a Young Man: A Reappraisal of The Catcher in the Rye," Modern Language Quarterly 25(1964):461.

other writer, has written of the dehumanizing pressures that have been put upon black people in the United States.

Ellison's latest book, entitled Going to the Territory,²⁷ comprises a selection from two decades of the author's essays, lectures, personal reminiscences and interviews in which the author talks about the novel, writing poetry and modern drama. Two interviews are particularly closely connected to Invisible Man. One is entitled: "On Initiation Rites and Power: Ralph Ellison Speaks at West Point." In that interview, Ellison directly talks about the significance and relevance of Invisible Man. Among other things, he says that he conceived of that novel to be specifically about a "young Negro American's experience"²⁸ but generally to reflect universal experiences of all human beings. In another interview, entitled "A Very Stern Discipline," Ellison relates how he was partly influenced through certain literature such as "English, French, Spanish, Russian--especially nineteenth-century Russian literature--and Irish literature, Joyce and Yeats, and through the international literature of the twenties. He was also influenced through the perspective of folklore"²⁹ to write Invisible Man. Two other essays in that book deal specifically with the novel as a genre and its functions. In one of them, Ellison says that it is the responsibility of the (American) novelist to persuade the American

²⁷Ralph Ellison, Going to the Territory (New York: Random House, 1986).

²⁸Id, "On Initiation Rites and Power: Ralph Ellison Speaks at West Point," in Ibid, p. 56.

²⁹Id, "A Very Stern Discipline," in Ibid, p. 289.

reader to identify that which is basic in man beyond all differences of "class, race, wealth, education."³⁰ In the other essay Ellison asserts that the novel should help its readers to differentiate the "good from bad, cowardice from heroism, the marvelous from the mundane and the banal"³¹ and that that is the only way the readers will know "who"³² they are. The above cited interviews and essays are just a small part of the rich contents of Going to the Territory; however, since they are directly relevant to this study, they have been cited here. Judging by Ellison's views, it is no wonder then that Invisible Man deals with various themes common to most human beings.

Various significant themes are treated in Invisible Man, including urban life in the city of New York. When the nameless protagonist and narrator of the novel is expelled from college in the south, he leaves for "New York City, where he believes there are opportunities for jobs and therefore for money."³³ For others, like the "fat man," New York is a place of freedom. In that city the hero assumes a series of roles: a young man seeking employment, a semi-skilled laborer, the Harlem leader of the Brotherhood, and a speaker on women's rights. Blind to the potential of freedom, he is manipulated by an anti-union fanatic, a

³⁰Id, "Society, Morality and the Novel," in Ibid, p. 273.

³¹Id, "The Novel as a Function of American Democracy," in Ibid, p. 319.

³²Id, Ibid.

³³Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man (New York: Vintage Books, 1952), pp. 150-151. All subsequent quotations from this text will be cited from this edition, unless otherwise noted.

psychiatrist, a higher official in the brotherhood and a black nationalist. The order of events in New York is senseless; it will become meaningful when the hero, like Camus' stranger, accepts that senseless order as the absurd logic of his life.

In New York the protagonist "works for Liberty Paints." (p. 202) Russell G. Fischer has commented on the significance of this, saying that, "The portrayal of the hero's experiences as a factory worker in the north represents the southern Negroes' encounter with the industrial north."³⁴ The hero's journey from the college to the city, says Fischer, has historical significance, for it follows the major migration pattern of blacks, which began about 1910 and continues to the present day.

Nostalgia, which here refers to remorse, to wistful, sentimental or homesick feelings, or simply to recapturing the past, is another significant theme in Invisible Man. For example, one of the characters, the "vet," had been to France, where, as a physician, he had performed surgery on patients, but "he returned home to the United States because of nostalgia." (p. 90) Another character, Barbee, also "looks back to his life with nostalgia." (p. 124) Ellison writes about nostalgia, apparently because he believes that "the past is very important in shaping the present and the future." (p. xiii) Nostalgic emotion, and even anguish, does play a powerful role in Ellison's novel. The nameless hero both understands the emotion in others and frequently feels an ambiguous nostalgia himself. At first the narrator attempts to

³⁴Russell G. Fischer, "Invisible Man as History" in College Language Association Journal 17(March 1974):349-350.

deny his cultural and racial heritage, although he later accepts his cultural heritage, as seen, for instance, when he buys a yam--a food associated with his southern past--and feels a genuine pleasure as he eats on the street.

Ellison also explores the theme of racial conflict in his novel. He pictures the general place of blacks in American society and the specific quest for identity of the black individual in the United States. As most critics concur, the theme of Invisible Man is "keep this nigger boy running."³⁵ Various experiences by the protagonist confirm this theme.

One of the experiences occurs early in the novel. Having graduated from high school as valedictorian, the protagonist was invited to a gathering of the town's leading citizens to receive a scholarship to the state Negro college. Before the award was made, he was drawn into a group of black "toughs" and compelled by drunken, jeering whites to gaze at a naked blonde, fight a blindfolded "battle royal," and grab for coins on an electrified rug at what is called the "stag party" or "men's smoker."

The stag party or men's smoker has always been an affair (like fraternity hazings) to bring out the worst in the male of the species. Providing liberation from the restraints ordinarily imposed by female society, it commonly caters to license and lust and is designed to bolster the feeling of male superiority. When institutionalized at a municipal level, as it is here, it becomes an opportunity to display status as well. Held in the main ballroom of the leading hotel, 'it is attended by the town's big shots' dressed in tuxedos--bankers, lawyers, judges, doctors, fire chiefs, teachers, merchants, 'even one of the more fashionable pastors.' Add to these factors the existence of a racially segregated society, and

³⁵Ibid., p. 340.

one can predict the direction the smoker will take--that of cruel humiliation practiced on the white female entertainer and ten black (men) entertainers.³⁶

The end of the Battle Royal marks the winning of a scholarship by the protagonist. Thereafter he has a recurring dream in which his grandfather tells him to open his briefcase. He finds in it an official state envelope containing another envelope containing another envelope. The last contains an engraved stamp with the message "To Whom It May Concern. Keep This Nigger-Boy Running." (p. 33) The clowns are blacks. The envelopes are years of frustration. The card is his scholarship, which is one way of keeping the nigger-boy running--by keeping him docile, harmless and no threat to white supremacy. The grandfather's message and the briefcase tell us about black and white relationships. As one critic³⁷ points out, this episode indicates that white people are determined to keep black people "running."

Another episode significant in the treatment of the theme of black and white relationships is that of mixing paint at the factory whose motto is "KEEP AMERICA PURE WITH LIBERTY PAINTS." (p. 192) The Invisible Man is taken to some buckets filled with a milky brown substance which becomes white when it is stirred. The Invisible Man is then given the job of adding drops of black liquid to make the paint whiter. The procedure is vaguely symbolic of the white component of American society which is trying to keep the society pure white.

³⁶Ibid., p. 340.

³⁷Eugenia W. Collier, "The Nightmare Truth of an Invisible Man" in Black World (December 1970):12-17.

Essentially, American society is milky brown, not pure white, so something has to be stirred into it to make it "pure" and "good." The interplay of the images of black and white carries dramatic import. While the protagonist is working there, an explosion occurs and he ends up in the hospital. As Eugenia Collier explains, "The scene symbolizes white America's modification of the black man, which robs him of his black selfhood and leaves him confused and disoriented."³⁸

Coupled with the theme of the racial problem is the theme of class conflict. The whites are shown to be better off economically and politically than the blacks. For example, in the Liberty Paint Factory the whites are the managers, while blacks like the protagonist work at meager jobs where they have neither a voice nor any authority. For example, when the narrator is assigned to mix ten drops of black paint into every can of optic white, he protests that the black will discolor the white. His white foreman replies, "Never mind how it looks. That's my worry. You just do what you're told and don't try to think about it." (p. 196) The racial conflict is here evidenced in the issue that the Invisible Man has no power, he is nothing, and hence he is mistreated simply because he belongs to the black race. On the contrary, the whites are in total control because of their race.

Through another character, Dr. Bledsoe, relationships between blacks and whites are also seen. While a student at a black college of which Dr. Bledsoe is the principal, the protagonist is asked to guide a white trustee through the campus and the neighboring countryside. They

³⁸Ibid., p. 16-17.

end up at the Golden Day, the local roadhouse, where each Saturday a group of disabled black veterans is taken for a day of whiskey and women. Here the protagonist and the trustee witness a chaotic orgy, a slapstick but savage rebellion of the inmates, mentally and physically disabled black veterans, against their giant attendant, Supercargo, and they listen to the perceptive ravings of a mad black doctor. As they drive through the countryside, Mr. Norton, the trustee, insists upon visiting Jim Trueblood. Trueblood is a Southern black sharecropper whose wife and daughter are both pregnant by him. Trueblood relates aspects of his life, saying that he has committed incest and is responsible for his daughter's pregnancy. Mr. Norton is shocked by this revelation. The protagonist suffers much mental anguish because he knows he will be in trouble with the college officials, especially Dr. Bledsoe, if Mr. Norton is harmed in any way. Critics have suggested that Mr. Norton, the dignified and respectable philanthropist, is troubled by memories of a submerged attraction to his own daughter revived by the pathetic, tormented Trueblood. By contrast, the threat posed by the Golden Day is painfully physical--Norton may collapse and die within its walls owing to accumulated shocks. The narrator, of course, desperately desires to keep Norton relatively safe in the car after providing brandy or whiskey for him.³⁹ Indeed, when the protagonist reaches the school Dr. Bledsoe expels him and writes a very poor recommendation letter for him to use when looking for a job. It is important to note that the narrator does hope to return to college for

³⁹Russell G. Fischer, "Invisible Man as History," College Language Association Journal 17(March, 1974):344.

his degree. Bledsoe, on the contrary, not only resolves that he shall not do so but tries to insure that he will be unemployed wherever he proceeds--and nowhere will his position be worse than in New York. The main points regarding racial conflict in this episode include the fact that "Dr. Bledsoe prefers to impress the whites in order to survive." (p. 136) While the protagonist is honest and genuine, Dr. Bledsoe asserts that "Black people must be liars to impress whites," (p. 137) the point being that because whites have asserted their superiority black people should live by pleasing them. Another idea that emerges is that white power can transform a lie into truth. As Dr. Bledsoe tells the protagonist: "You're a black educated fool, son. These white folk have newspapers, magazines, radios, spokesmen to get their ideas across. If they want to tell the world a lie, they can tell it so well that it becomes the truth; and if I tell them that you're lying, they'll tell the world even if you prove you're telling the truth. Because it's a kind of lie they want to hear." (pp. 140-141) In this episode the conflict between black (Dr. Bledsoe) and black (the narrator) is sparked by their relationship with Mr. Norton, a white supporter of the college who prides himself on helping the Negro but has no understanding of Negroes as individuals. As the critic Richard Kostelanetz asserts:

Here, Ellison shows how the white powers make the Negroes channel their aggressive impulses inward upon their own race instead of upon their true enemy, who remains on the sidelines, supervising the fray to make sure the violence is directed away from themselves.⁴⁰

⁴⁰Richard Kostelanetz, "The Politics of Ralph Ellison's Booker: Invisible Man As Symbolic History," Chicago Review 19(December 1967):8.

Sex is another theme treated in Invisible Man. Various episodes illustrate a black man's quest for sexual identity, as well as the black-white sexual relationship in the United States. One example of a black man's sexual confusion is the incestuous relationship of Jim Trueblood and his daughter. The result of his disgusting act is that while "black people were against what he did, white people treated him better after his deed." (p. 67) One critic observes that "Trueblood's experience contradicts (Booker T.) Washington's belief that white society would reward only those Negroes who live by its expressed morality. Instead, they eagerly appreciate a Negro who conforms to the traditional stereotype of the immoral savage in black skin."⁴¹

The protagonist also has some relationships with certain white women which mirror his consequent disillusionment. At the beginning of the novel, a blonde female danced in the nude before quite a large audience. She had been hired to provide a dangerous spectacle for the black youths even as she excited the white men who were responsible for the entire affair. The protagonist found this to be very unpleasant. "I saw the terror and disgust in her eyes, almost like my own terror and that which I saw in the other boys (black youths)." (p. 20) In another scene, the protagonist assumes the role of Rinehart (a multi-faceted character whom we never meet and who brings about a crisis in the Invisible Man's life because he is several times mistaken for Rinehart) to gain a mistress, a spy in the Brotherhood hierarchy. Here he gets his white girl, Sybil, a married woman who wants only to be raped by a

⁴¹Ibid., p. 10.

black man. However, when duty calls him back to Harlem his first thought is to get Sybil home safely; he instinctively rejects his Rinehart role. There are many other episodes in the novel which treat this subject. The point is that all the examples illustrate the nature of the sexual confusion between blacks and whites in the United States. As one critic says: "Ellison uses the protagonist's sexual encounters as a means of portraying a major American myth--the myth of Negro sexuality. In the first encounter, the woman regards the hero as a primitive savage, while in the second, the woman asks him to act out a rape fantasy. Ironically, in each instance, it is the woman who is the aggressor."⁴²

Calvin C. Hernton, in his book Sex and Racism in America, has described the white woman's stereotyped view of the black male as "sexually abnormal," and says that when these women have had intercourse with a Negro they feel as if they have been "raped." The man may be ever so gentle and kind; the woman nevertheless feels that he has "ravished" ⁴³ her. The critic William Walling ⁴⁴ shares this view.

The themes of the social responsibility of black people and the leadership of blacks by blacks are also dealt with in Invisible Man. The scene at the white man's club referred to above ends with the young hero, limp and swollen because of participating in the Battle Royal,

⁴²Russell G. Fischer, "Invisible Man as History," p. 361.

⁴³Calvin C. Hernton, Sex and Racism in America (New York: Grove Press, 1966), p. 39.

⁴⁴William Walling, "Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man: It Goes a Long Way Back, Some Twenty Years," Phylon: The Atlanta University Review of Race and Culture, 30(March 1973):15.

enthusiastically delivering again his graduation speech on the social responsibility of black people. The mature protagonist has realized what the real world is like since the time he painfully watched the eviction of an aged black couple from their apartment. Therefore, he soon becomes the Harlem leader of the "Brotherhood," whose mission is "... looking for a better world for all people." (p. 297) In his speech, the protagonist also mentions "Moses" and "Egypt" and "Pharoahs." (p. 305) The significance of those references is that black people have always likened themselves to the children of Israel in bondage (Egypt). They have always comforted themselves by saying that, just as Moses rescued the "children" of Israel from Pharoah's bondage, so will a black leader emerge who will deliver them from bondage to the white man. The protagonist urges black people to be responsible and to lead other oppressed blacks out of their bondage.

Freedom is another theme which the novel articulates. The question of freedom is treated early in the book, that is, in the prologue. The protagonist expresses his wish to find out the meaning of the term "freedom" in a "hallucinatory state induced by marijuana"⁴⁵ during which he encounters an old woman, a singer of spirituals. She tells the protagonist about "her love-sons."⁴⁶ She has to make a choice between freedom and the master whom she hates, choosing freedom. The protagonist is puzzled at the old woman's choice of freedom; he asks her, "Old Woman, what is this freedom you love so well?" (p. 11)

⁴⁵Eugenia W. Collier, "The Nightmare Truth of an Invisible Man," Black World (December 1970):13.

⁴⁶Ibid.

Although she cannot define the word, she knows what freedom is, what it costs, and she values it highly. The protagonist, on the contrary, does not. But the old woman's son threatens the protagonist for making her cry with his questions about freedom: "Next time you got questions like that, ask yourself." (p.12) Later, when he has assumed responsibility for black people by being their leader and orator, the protagonist lists their grievances and urges them "to be united in order to get freedom." (pp. 335-336) Here, apparently, he has matured enough to appreciate and yearn for freedom. Also, later on, when he assumes the role of Rinehart, he looks at the world through his green glasses, sees the dark merging of shapes, and realizes that this is the way Rinehart must see life, as full of possibilities. And he sees that freedom is not the recognition of necessity alone, but also the recognition of possibility. (pp. 486-488) As one critic points out, "Ellison has his hero migrate from the south to the north (upward) to find that (freedom) which he is in search of. Yet the hero finds that freedom not in an upward movement but in a downward fall."⁴⁷

Black values such as jazz, dance, spirituals (music) and preaching are dealt with in Invisible Man. Preaching, church and music as inseparable aspects of black life are clearly indicated in the novel.

In one episode, when the protagonist as the black leader is giving a speech on women's rights, "black music is sung." (p. 303) During that same Brotherhood struggle, "the members sang other songs." (p. 331) Again, in another episode "the preaching of Reverend Rinehart is

⁴⁷M. Celeste Oliver, "Invisible Man and the Numbers Game," College Language Association Journal 22(December 1978):132.

alternated by church music." (p. 486) During the women's movement struggle in the novel, the crowd watched a "Sambo Boogie Woogie paper doll dance." (p. 421) As an entertainer, Sambo would "kill the crowd's depression" (p. 422) with his dancing and thus would make them forget their problems, says the protagonist. Ellison here has presented the main tenets of black values. Music (whether gospel, jazz, spirituals, and other entertaining music), church, preaching, praying and dance (in church or in the entertainment world) have been very significant components of black culture from time immemorial. It is through music and the Bible (church) that black people have persevered and tolerated the problems of discrimination, racial prejudice, segregation, lynching and many other ills that they faced from the white "masters." That is to say that Ellison claims music, dancing, and preaching as indispensable parts of the life of black people. There are various kinds of music among black people. Each is significant on certain occasions. For example, one realizes that fact shortly after Trueblood has committed incest; the preacher is not willing to listen to him, and he sings the "blues" because he is both distressed by his shameful deed and upset because of the unsympathetic response from the supposed man of God. As one critic comments: "For many Negroes, the blues is the principal form used to express and deal with painful experience and personal responsibility."⁴⁸ One critic also comments on the use of black values in Invisible Man, saying: "Consciously, he (Ellison)

⁴⁸Russell G. Fischer, "Invisible Man as History," p. 338.

attempts to adapt the music, the blues and jazz to his style and purposely borrows from the tradition of black folk story-telling."⁴⁹

The importance of history is a subject of concern to Ellison in Invisible Man. In his introductory remarks he asserts that history is important. In the protagonist's speech to the "Brotherhood" audience, he catalogs the names of famous people in the past such as Booker T. Washington, Jefferson, Jackson, Pulaski, Garibaldi, Sun Yat-sen, Daniel O'Connell, Abraham Lincoln and countless others who are being asked to step once again upon the stage of history (p. 299). According to Ellison, it is history which forms a background for the present and for the future. "Jim Crow," that policy of discriminating against and segregating black people in the United States, is mentioned in Invisible Man as a part of history. Jim Crow was practiced by legal enforcement of discrimination laws or traditional sanctions of segregational arrangements. That reality is vividly reflected in Invisible Man when, on the bus, the protagonist, Crenshaw, and the vet sat at the rear because the front part was reserved for whites only. As Crenshaw tells the vet, "Aw, quit trying to show off your education You riding back here in the Jim Crow just like me." (p. 153) The entire journey of the protagonist from the South to the North reflects some history of the United States.

The critic Russell G. Fischer has summed up Invisible Man as a novel reflecting history, saying:

⁴⁹Jerry H. Bryant, "Wright, Ellison, Baldwin--Exorcising the Demon," Phylon 37(June 1976):181-182.

Before he is able to understand his part and realize that he is invisible, the hero plays three major roles in the novel, and each of these roles is acted out in a context that has historical significance. In his first role, as an ambitious and naive student at a Southern college, the hero is subject to and accepts white supremacy and the accommodationist policies of Booker T. Washington which were prominent before the First World War. In his second role, as a factory worker at Liberty Paints, the narrator undergoes the experiences of the Southern Negro coming North after 1915 and confronting an urban industrial environment where he is used by employers and distrusted by unions, and where attempts are made to destroy his racial and cultural identity. In his third role, as a political organizer for the Brotherhood, the protagonist embraces communism, as did several Negro intellectuals during the 1930's; he encounters black nationalism reminiscent of Marcus Garvey's Movement, only to be betrayed by the former and to reject the latter, and he experiences a riot similar to the Harlem riot of March 1935.

In his various roles, Ellison's hero has experienced three major epochs of Negro American history from Reconstruction to the Second World War, and it is when he realizes that throughout his life he has been blind to his true situation that the hero is forced to come to terms with his history.⁵⁰

The brotherhood of man is depicted in Invisible Man. As a leader of the Brotherhood movement, the speaker addresses various grievances, including women's issues. As a leader of the Brotherhood, the protagonist's new role has some good qualities in it, because now he has a sharper realization of the world around him. He is also closer to his goal of self-understanding. The essence of the Brotherhood is to provide "women the full opportunity for self-expression, which is so very important." (p. 403) The Brotherhood also operates as a collective group, as evidenced by their usage of the word "we." (p. 309) Here the members of the organization are working collectively, not as

⁵⁰Russell G. Fischer, "Invisible Man as History," p. 367.

individuals. The Brotherhood seems to be the communist party. As one critic suggests:

Ellison has stated that in writing Invisible Man he did not identify the Brotherhood with the Communist party, and to do so is to misread the novel. Yet several elements in the novel strongly suggest that the Brotherhood does indeed represent the Communist party. Jack, the leader of the Brotherhood, has red hair--the color red symbolizing Communism--and when he grows excited, he breaks into a foreign language indicating, Russian domination of the Brotherhood. Also, when the hero accepts a position with the Brotherhood, the occasion is toasted by drinking "a clear liquid" (p. 269), which is probably vodka--again suggesting Russia and Communism.⁵¹

In Invisible Man, the themes reinforce the gist of the novel, that is, "Keep this nigger boy running." From his experiences the protagonist discovers that he is in fact invisible to most people of the real world. He has trusted people like Dr. Bledsoe, who betrayed him. Encased in the hospital machine, the protagonist comes to realize that racist white America has deprived him to suit its warped and selfish purposes. Finally, in the dark cellar the protagonist comes to grips with his life. First he burns the papers in his briefcase, each of which symbolizes a past deception which has obscured his identity. Each burning paper lights the next one, until the sudden realization arrives that Brother Jack (the one-eyed member or leader of the Brotherhood who causes the Invisible Man to become a member, but who later betrays him) both named him and set him running. That awareness makes him lose control. Later he falls in a trance and hears a voice saying, "That's enough, don't kill yourself. You've run enough, you're through with them at last." (p. 556) In his dream, the protagonist finally makes up

⁵¹Ibid., p. 359.

his mind and declares, "No, I'm through with all your illusions and lies, I'm through running." (p. 556) Thus the protagonist abandons his past illusions, for he has discovered that he is invisible.

All the powerful themes above could not have been successfully articulated if it were not for the techniques that Ellison uses to examine them. The succeeding paragraphs will discuss the various techniques. Characterization is one of the effective techniques which Ellison uses to treat the various themes. The principal characters are the nameless narrator-hero; Dr. Bledsoe; Mr. Norton; Brother Jack, the leader of the Brotherhood; Rinehart, a racketeer, lover and minister; Ras the Destroyer, the leader of the black nationalists; and, finally, Sybil, a married white woman.

Ellison's protagonist is a great orator, an extremely clever, intelligent youngster who wins a scholarship to a renowned black college. He studies at the college for some time before he is sent away in disgrace. The protagonist goes through various experiences which are dehumanizing and which lead him at the end of the novel to discover that he is, in fact, invisible. In presenting an intelligent, effective orator as well as an honest protagonist, and in allowing other characters to keep the protagonist running, Ellison successfully presents a powerful artistic representation of black people under dehumanizing conditions imposed upon them by the whites.

Dr. Herbert Bledsoe, principal of the hero's black college, is a specimen of that repulsive cult of academic autocrats in whom power has narrowed vision to self-interest. Bledsoe's ethics are fashioned from the one thing he knows above all else: "power." (p. 140) According to Bledsoe, "Power is confident, self-assuring, self-starting and self-

stopping, self-warming and self-justifying." (p. 140) He exploits the southern racial situation to maintain his power. Despite his influence, fame and wealth, he does nothing to advance the black race. His interest is to maintain and enhance his own power over other blacks. It is ironic that in spite of the hero's expulsion he wants to go back to college and pursue his dream of success, but that Bledsoe has different ideas regarding the protagonist's future. It is the college president who gives the narrator a letter which is supposed to recommend him for job opportunities, but which instead betrays him. Bledsoe's letter is designed to "keep this nigger boy running."

Dr. Bledsoe is a liar and a hypocrite. According to him, to get power is the main thing; to gain power the black must practice deceit and hypocrisy, pretending to be humble and subservient to the white man. Ultimately Dr. Bledsoe comes to represent the archetype of the evil betrayer, one who betrays not just an individual but, by his manner and views, everyone.

Yet a partial explanation for Bledsoe is college trustee Norton, the Boston multi-millionaire philanthropist and donor to the black college, as will be observed below. Norton exerts himself to help others, and yet it is he who causes the protagonist to be expelled. Mr. Norton is the archetype of the big businessman who feels that he is discharging his obligations to society by contributing large sums of money to a black college. Nevertheless, he speaks and deals in generalities. While spouting forth Emersonian ideas about equality, self-reliance, and individuality, he has no more than a surface understanding of the things he says and cannot apply the ideas to his own life. He seems incapable of understanding anyone's individual

needs or of understanding any individual. Bledsoe gains much of his power from Mr. Norton.

Like some others in the novel, Mr. Norton functions more as an idea or concept than as a character. In spite of the reality which he was forced to confront in Trueblood's story and the experiences at the Golden Day, there is a strong feeling that he will, by the end of the novel, retreat into his own secure world and never again face reality.

Brother Jack is apparently a truly non-racist white man. He is so calm, so objective, so helpful that at first the human failings of the other members of the Brotherhood are not his. He is a consummately disciplined individual. He is so good that one might speculate that he is a Christ-figure. He is the leader of the Brotherhood, after all, and the Invisible Man sees himself as Jack's disciple. In fact, at the end of the novel, during his night of terror in Harlem, it is Jack and Mary whom the Invisible Man wants to find. However, Jack is a fanatical leader, a leader who spews ideology. He loses control, goes into a rage and pops out his glass eye! Then we realize that, though the Invisible Man may have a psychological blindness, Jack is a man literally half-blind.⁵² Moreover, his view of man and history is also half-blind, for he is willing to use any means to achieve his end and to sacrifice a part of humanity for the "good of the white."

Jack, the one man in the book who seemed unselfishly dedicated at the beginning, turns out to be the worst kind of man. He is a man who says the right things and then twists them to suit the needs of his

⁵²Russell G. Fischer, "Invisible Man as History," pp. 343-344.

fanatical ideology. Jack uses people, too. He is a Bledsoe, a Norton; he is little different from them, or worse, even, because as the Invisible Man is lighting his way with the papers of his past he discovers that it was Jack who wrote, out of his jealousy and deception, the insidious note to "go slow." Jack's note was among the betrayal papers which the protagonist carried in his briefcase. Brother Jack is not a Christ-figure, but an anti-Christ or a Judas. The significance of his characterization is that, like Emerson, Bledsoe and Ras, among others, he too had "kept the protagonist running" up to the end, when the protagonist discovered that he had been invisible to his ill-wishers like Jack.

Rinehart, who never appears in the novel, cannot actually be analyzed as a character, but, since he influences the Invisible Man, he becomes a pivotal personage. Actually, what happens is that the Invisible Man buys some dark glasses and a white hat which resemble closely the outfit of someone named Rinehart. Whenever the Invisible Man uses that hat and those glasses, he is mistaken for Rinehart. The Rinehart he imitates plays many diverse roles. He is a runner, a gambler, a briber, a lover and a minister. Rinehart exploits the possibilities of the world, but also contributes to its destructiveness, and the hero's final step toward independence will be the rejection of Rinehart. The question which puzzles the protagonist is that Rinehart must see life as full of opportunities, unless all he assumed was a lie. "Still, could he (Rinehart) be all of them: Rine the runner and Rine the gambler and Rine the briber and Rinehart the Reverend?"

(p. 487) The protagonist feels that if someone like Rinehart has too many faces, then each one must be a mask which conceals the fact that he

has absolutely no identity at all. Thus, while playing many roles, Rinehart himself is invisible and, while trying to be all things, is actually nothing. Hence the protagonist's disguise, a kind of blindfold, allows him to see some important distinctions between identity and invisibility.

Ras the Destroyer, the leader of the black nationalists, is a significant character in the novel. Brother Jack first refers to Ras, saying, "Brother, you have heard of Ras? He is the wild man who calls himself a black nationalist." (p. 355) As Brother Jack further asserts: "(Ras the Destroyer) goes wild when he sees black people and white people together" (p. 356) because he is against racial integration. One critic likens him to the black nationalist Marcus Garvey, saying "Ras's appeal, like Garvey's, is based upon racial pride and African nationalism."⁵³ Ras possesses a strong emotional appeal for blacks. He is a pivotal figure in the development of the Invisible Man's philosophy. Even though the two are diametrically opposed in their views, the Invisible Man feels a strange attraction to or identification with Ras, caused partially by the fact that Ras is, in spite of his hatreds, a symbol of the black man's past, his basic instincts and his basic drives. Even the speech patterns of Ras reflect a heritage of which he is extremely proud.

Unlike Ras, the Invisible Man strives for enlightened and humane behavior and for equality among the races. He also advances the belief that a man should be judged by his worth and not by his race or color.

⁵³Russell G. Fischer, "Invisible Man as History," p. 363.

He is therefore totally opposed to all that Ras stands for. Ras' violence, his emphasis on the instinctual, and his insistence upon separation are qualities which the Invisible Man hopes to remove from all mankind. He hopes that through the Brotherhood he can achieve an identity based upon his own individuality.

Emma is one of the minor characters in the novel. She is Brother Jack's mistress, but shows an immediate sexual interest in the Invisible Man. She adds a note of comedy, even of farce, but Ellison never forgets the essentially bleak facts of her overprivileged life, her hypocrisy, her lack of political and social interest and her exploitation of the vulnerability of the narrator. (p. 501)

Finally, there is Sybil. In historical context, "Sybil" was the name ancient Romans gave to any aged woman who could supposedly foretell the future. Most critics have likened the Sybil of Invisible Man to those of Virgil's Aeneid and Ovid's Metamorphosis. She is the wife of one of the white "big shots" in the Brotherhood whom the Invisible Man plans to use in order to gain power, since she is interested in sleeping with him. But she wants him to perform degrading or debasing sexual acts, and so he simply gets her drunk and, eventually, is able to send her home. (pp. 506-520) She drunkenly refers to the hero as "anonymous brute 'n boo'ful buck," (p. 518) and believes she has been raped, when in reality the hero has carefully avoided intercourse with her. Ellison thus, through Sybil's relationship with the Invisible Man, successfully portrays the myth of black male sexual relationships with white women in the United States. Ellison here is portraying the white woman's stereotyped view of the Negro male; that is, many white women who have intercourse with Negro men feel as though they have been raped.

Through the various primary and secondary characters in Invisible Man, Ellison has successfully developed the significant themes of that novel.

Another important technique is plot. The plot of Invisible Man is divided into six sections. Section one is the prologue; section two, comprising chapters one through six, deals first with the brutal initiation of the protagonist into the club world of the Southern white man and his receipt of a scholarship to a black college. Secondly, it deals with the narrator's career at college and ends with his abrupt departure for New York. The third section, chapters seven through nine, carries the narrator from his continued Southern naivete in trusting Bledsoe to the shock of his first sharp Northern initiation concerning the contents of the sealed letters. The fourth section, chapters ten through twelve, deepens his initiation into Northern reality by immersing him in the nightmare of twentieth-century industrialism for untrained Southern blacks. The fifth and by far the longest section, chapters thirteen through twenty-five, deals essentially with the narrator's experiences in an alternative society of supposed equality between blacks and whites (the Brotherhood) and culminates in the explosion of a race riot.⁵⁴ The sixth section, which is also the last chapter of the novel, comprises its epilogue. The prologue and epilogue serve respectively as the introduction to and conclusion of Invisible Man. One critic, in commending Ellison for the powerfulness of his plot, says that "It moves the reader from individual Negro experience to

⁵⁴William Walling, "Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man," p. 8.

the convulsion of a whole society."⁵⁵ The plot of Invisible Man can be seen as organized around the protagonist's "journey" from innocence to experience and from the rural South to the Northern big city. After a series of nightmarish misadventures in which he is degraded, exploited and betrayed, the hero finally discovers that he is invisible to the world and especially to the white society.

Ellison's usage of diction or word choice in the novel is very powerful, clear and effective. His vocabulary is complex, but very appropriately and effectively utilized. An example occurs in the prologue:

Nor is my invisibility exactly a matter of biochemical accident to my epidermis. The invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of their inner eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality. (p. 3)

The choice of the word "invisibility" and its repetition serves to emphasize the gist of the story, namely that the protagonist's attempts are designed to discover his true identity--who he is and what he is--because he finds that he is invisible to the white race. Also, the repetition of "eyes" in the following phrases, "the eyes," "inner eyes," "those eyes," "physical eyes," is both poetic and meaningful. The eyes are the basic instruments used to judge if something is visible or invisible. The Invisible Man is not visible because, although the white race can see him with their physical eyes, they cannot see him with

⁵⁵William J. Schafer, "Ralph Ellison and the Birth of the Anti-Hero" in Ralph Ellison: A Collection of Critical Essays. Edited by John Hersey (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974), p. 116-117.

their "inner eyes;" they refuse to acknowledge his presence, and hence his existence, because of racial prejudice.

Ellison also alternates black speech and standard English to effectively treat the reality of the Invisible Man and the environment surrounding him. For example, there is a scene in which Miss Mary talks in black dialect to the protagonist. Miss Mary Rambo is a "Sambo"-like figure who nurses and "mothers" the Invisible Man back to health after he is injured in the Liberty Paint factory. She becomes a symbol of security for him. She is the aging black woman whose grasp of reality has neither totally submerged her energies nor prevented her from experiencing and acting with compassion for others, including the narrator. The protagonist, on the contrary, speaks in "standard" English. Their dialects reflect their backgrounds, indicating that the protagonist has had some college education, while Mary has had little formal education. Black dialect usage is also effective and important because it imitates the real-life speech of some black Americans and is one aspect of the realism of the novel.

The author also utilizes the first-person narrator to effectively present his ideas. This technique is powerful because, instead of getting second-hand information from the author as he thinks out the thoughts of the protagonist, we learn his thoughts directly from the protagonist himself. The narrator vividly tells the readers of his journey through contemporary America in search of success, companionship and, finally, self-identity. Using "standard English" and utilizing in some cases a complex vocabulary, the protagonist provides a detailed history of his experiences, bitter experiences which teach him that he is invisible because all the people he had encountered in life "had

betrayed him." (p. 546-547) Thus the unnamed narrator functions in the long-established tradition of the "Bildungsroman," that is, the story of a young person who encounters varied experiences; each of the narrated episodes contributes in some manner to his ultimate development.

The author also employs symbolism at various levels. There is symbolism at the individual character level, whereby a certain character represents a certain group or a certain theme. For example, Dr. Bledsoe and Brother Wrestrum can be seen as the two most pronounced examples of a totally false relationship to the American black's past; that is, in these two characters, the desire to pretend that the historical reality of slavery is susceptible to concealment for the sake of present advancement. Dr. Bledsoe, officiating as the president of a black college, betrays the Invisible Man instead of helping his "black brother." As for Brother Wrestrum, a member of the Brotherhood, he becomes jealous of the Invisible Man's popularity and falsely accuses him of using the Brotherhood for personal gain.

There is also symbolism at the level of dreams. The protagonist's dreams symbolize certain messages. For example, towards the end of the novel the protagonist lapses into a kind of half-dream and half-hallucination in which he finds that he is the prisoner of Bledsoe, Norton, Ras, the school superintendent and others, all of whom have "run" the protagonist. There are other dreams also. For example, the anguish of the beautiful girl's recurring nightmare, a dream which affirms the individual's need for an undistorted awareness of his or her selfhood. The beautiful girl's dream is described by her to the narrator, and it makes an unforgettable impression on him. According to her dream, her face (her beauty, her self) expanded "until it filled the

whole room, becoming a formless mass, while her eyes ran in a bilious jelly up the chimney. And so it is with me. Without light I am not only invisible, but formless as well; and to be unaware of one's form is to live a death. I myself, after existing some twenty years, did not become alive until I discovered my invisibility." (pp. 6-7) Commenting on this dream, Eugenia Collier says:

Invisibility is not formlessness--not lack of identity, but rather a positive recognition of a selfhood different from that established for one by society and unrecognized by those whom society has rendered unable to see.⁵⁶

Thus symbolism, a complex method of enhancing literature, is effectively used here to present the sensitive racial problem of blacks and whites in the United States.

As with the other novels included for study in the projected course, the contemporary critical reception of Invisible Man will be examined. Most of the critical reviews of Invisible Man in 1952 and thereafter share the same view, that it is "an exceptionally good book and in parts an extremely funny one."⁵⁷ Many critics also concur that Invisible Man is the most impressive work of fiction by a black American.⁵⁸ Ellison uses words with great skill and writes with poetic

⁵⁶Eugenia Collier, "The Nightmare Truth of an Invisible Man," Black World (December 1970):12-19.

⁵⁷Review of Invisible Man in New Yorker 28(May 31, 1952):93.

⁵⁸John Corry, "Profile of an American Novelist: A White View of Ralph Ellison," Black World (December 1970):116; Russell G. Fischer, "Invisible Man as History," College Language Association Journal 17 (March 1974):338; Nick Aaron Ford, "The Ambivalence of Ralph Ellison," Black World (December 1970):5; J. Noel Heermance, "A White Critic's Viewpoint: The Modern Negro Novel," Negro Digest (May 1964):67.

intensity and immense narrative drive. The majority of the critics have been positive, and they praise Ellison for his creative imagination. In summary, to borrow the critic Therman B. O'Daniel's words, Invisible Man

is a remarkably good book, an interesting and exciting work of fiction which, beginning with the prologue, immediately catches the reader's attention and holds on to it tenaciously as the story unfolds. Secondly, it is a complicated and highly involved novel.⁵⁹

The next novel for discussion is James Baldwin's Go Tell It On The Mountain (1953), but before that, a note on his biography is essential.

James Baldwin was born in New York City's Harlem on August 2, 1924 and educated in the city's public schools. "In 1948, a literary fellowship gave him the funds to go to Europe and since then he has alternated his residence between the United States and abroad."⁶⁰ His early short stories marked him as a talent of extraordinary promise--a promise more than fulfilled with his first novel, Go Tell It On The Mountain in 1953. He has gone on to become one of America's most celebrated writers with his novels, Giovanni's Room (1956), Another Country (1962), Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone (1968), If Beale Street Could Talk (1974), and Little Man, Little Man: A Story of Childhood (1976). His plays include Blues for Mr. Charlie (1964) and The Amen Corner (1968). His essays include Notes of a Native Son (1955), The Fire Next Time (1963), Nothing Personal (1964), Nobody Knows

⁵⁹Therman B. O'Daniel, "The Image of Man as Portrayed by Ralph Ellison," College Language Association Journal 10(June 1967):278.

⁶⁰Louis H. Pratt, James Baldwin (Boston, Massachusetts: Twayne Publishers, 1978), p. 14.

My Name: More Notes of a Native Son (1961), No Name in the Street (1972), and finally The Devil Finds Work: An Essay (1976). Going to Meet the Man (1965) is a collection of Baldwin's short stories headed by that which gives the book its title. His dialogues include A Dialogue. James Baldwin and Nikki Giovanni (1973) and A Rap on Race. Margaret Mead and James Baldwin (1971). He has also written a scenario entitled One Day When I Was Lost. A Scenario Based on Alex Haley's "The Autobiography of Malcolm X" (1972). Baldwin has written many other works--essays, reviews, letters, debates, discussions--which are too many to be enumerated here. His latest book, Evidence of Things Not Seen, about the slaying of twenty-nine black children in Atlanta, was published in 1984.

James Baldwin's writing is an enduring menace to white supremacy. In his novels and plays, and particularly in his essays (The Fire Next Time, Nobody Knows My Name, Notes of a Native Son), he has written eloquently and prophetically about American racism--and in so doing he has told white folks more than they ever wanted to hear (and certainly more than they could have figured out on their own) about the utter fraudulence of their self-congratulatory notion that they are 'white' and therefore superior. In Baldwin's uncompromising view, 'white' is a lie.⁶¹

The historical compass of Go Tell It On The Mountain ranges from 1863 to 1935 (John's fourteenth birthday). Book II of the novel is one enormous flashback encompassing the life of Rachel, John's grandmother, born a slave, who has died long before his birth. Book III then returns to 1935 and John's "conversion." In 1942 Baldwin began writing In My Father's House, which was later to become Go Tell It On The

⁶¹Anonymous, "On Being White... and Other Lies," Essence (April 1984):90.

Mountain."⁶² Although Baldwin denies that there is autobiographical material in Go Tell It On The Mountain, most critics believe that the "novel reflects, barely disguised, Baldwin's own life."⁶³ There is a similarity between the contents of Go Tell It On The Mountain and those of the actual life-history of James Baldwin and his family. The critic Michael Fabre says that that novel reflects Baldwin's and his family's religious background in approximately the first three decades of Baldwin's life.

Go Tell It On The Mountain is its author's first book and first novel. Its locale is Harlem, New York City, and it mirrors aspects of the urban life of black people there. The total effect of Christianity on the masses of ghetto blacks plays a major role in Baldwin's fiction, especially in Go Tell It On The Mountain. In this novel he asserts that the effect of religion has been debilitating and confusing to poor city blacks. He creates characters who fall into three overlapping categories, namely the hypocrite, the naive believer and the wayward, rebellious sinner--a type troublesome to both the other groups. The first group is generally depicted as the most dehumanized; the second is often ridiculed for lacking the ability to reason in choosing Christianity as an escape from life; the third is the most celebrated in

⁶²Michael Fabre, "Fathers and Sons in James Baldwin's Go Tell It On the Mountain" in James Baldwin: A Collection of Critical Essays. Edited by Kenneth Kinnamon (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974), pp. 134-135.

⁶³Ibid.

Baldwin's fiction.⁶⁴ One would expect this group to be the happiest of the lot, for it assails black followers of Christianity. However, the author's atheists are not allowed happiness or hope. In many instances they suffer greater anguish than either his hypocrites or his ignorant saints, as, for instance, John Grimes in Go Tell It On The Mountain, just before he faces "The Threshing Floor."

As a tool of revenge, Christianity causes blacks to become connivers and deceivers like those in group one. As a way out of a daily miserable existence, Christianity offers its followers emotional release and yearning for a better life after death--a fantasy entertaining the idea that earthly suffering brings heavenly reward. The life of ease which whites seem to enjoy here on earth will be granted to blacks in heaven, and upon this dream the second group depends. By denouncing Christianity through this manner of characterization, Baldwin allows his non-believers of the third group to become tormented heroes in Go Tell It On The Mountain as well as in most of his fiction and essays. As far as the novelist is concerned, to embrace the faith is debilitating whether it is used for revenge or escape, and to reject it is confusing because no solution to life's disappointments, fantastic or otherwise, is presented as absolutely viable. Those who reject the faith angrily continue to probe themselves for an answer as to why it has such a hold on others.⁶⁵ Baldwin asserts that certain urban blacks hold onto

⁶⁴Bennie Phelps Sherwood, "Baldwin and the Black Religious Experience in the Urban Ghetto" (Master's thesis, Atlanta University), p. 4.

⁶⁵Bennie Phelps Sherwood, "Baldwin and the Black Religious Experience in the Urban Ghetto," p. 5.

Christianity for reasons which are either deceitful or ignorant. The hypocrite and the true saint worship God for release from daily pressures, while secretly hoping that they will be delivered from their tormentors by God on the judgment day.

Gabriel Grimes, the protagonist of Go Tell It On The Mountain, is one of Baldwin's best-drawn hypocrites; he is John's Southern evangelical stepfather who, in his later life, becomes the deacon-caretaker of a storefront church in Harlem. His commentary on whites reinforces the author's idea of fantasy-revenge among some black church-goers, as the following statement will disclose:

His father (Gabriel) said that all white people were wicked, and that God was going to bring them low. He said that white people were never to be trusted, and that they told nothing but lies, and that not one of them had ever loved a nigger. He, John, was a nigger, and he would find out, as soon as he got a little older, how evil white people could be.⁶⁶

Furthermore, Baldwin shows the force of religion in the ghetto blacks' lives. The influence upon them was considerable in persuading them "to identify with Jews." (p. 70) The point is that through certain religions such as Christianity some black people have always identified themselves with the oppressed "children of Israel" (Jews). Also, the notion that just as the oppressed Jews were liberated from Egyptian bondage by Moses so would black people be delivered from the white man's yoke is expressed here. This notion is tied in with religion because it is through religion, through reading the Bible, that black people are

⁶⁶James Baldwin, Go Tell It On the Mountain (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1953), p. 36. All subsequent quotations from this text will be cited from this edition, unless otherwise noted.

able to identify with the long Jewish history of endurance of oppression.

Another group of black religious believers is that which searches for escape. In this group, such characters as Sister McCandless; Praying Mother Washington; Florence, who is Gabriel's sister; Elizabeth, the wife of Gabriel; Elisha; Sister Price; and Father James can be placed. Perhaps the most fully portrayed characters in this group are Florence and Elizabeth. The two are caught up in religion due to different circumstances, but their purpose is one and the same--that is, to escape life. Both harbor uncertainty and misery. Both are unhappy with the lives they have led. By the same token, both have no other path of refuge to turn to at last except the path of religion.

Florence has undergone many ordeals during her life. Initially she hates her miserable home life in the South, hoping to find happiness in the north. In New York, however, she is unhappy because of many problems, including the death of her husband Frank as well as memories of her dead mother. Problems in her life lead her to religion.

Similarly, Elizabeth undergoes various calamities of life which are described in a section of the novel entitled "Elizabeth's Prayer." In that section, her true love-affair with Richard is delicately described and tragically concluded when she, too, goes North to New York with her lover, Richard. Richard like, Deborah, Royal and Roy, falls foul of white society, is wrongfully accused of a crime, is acquitted by Elizabeth's efforts, but ends by committing suicide. Elizabeth is left with John, her illegitimate child by Richard. Richard's death and other problems lead her to be a staunch religious believer:

All things work together for good to them that love the Lord.

She (Elizabeth) tried to obliterate this burning phrase, and what it made her feel. What it made her feel, for the first time since the death of Richard, was hope. (p. 185)

In the third group there is the non-believer who feels that religion is the most dehumanizing concept ever implanted in men's minds. Baldwin contends that its hold on black people is solely the work of white people. John Grimes, the main character in Go Tell It On The Mountain, can be placed first in this category because he is definitely not religiously inclined (although he goes through the motions) until he has a religious experience on "The Threshing Floor." The novel never divulges whether or not John gets his wish. Immediately after the novel opens, John's attitude toward the church is revealed:

When he was young John had paid no attention in Sunday School, and always forgot the golden text, which earned him the wrath of his father. Around the time of his fourteenth birthday, with all the pressures of church and home uniting to drive him to the altar, he strove to appear more serious and therefore less conspicuous. (p. 13)

At an early age, John develops a distaste for church because it is forced upon him. He watches in awe and fear the saints perform during the services. When they sing, he at that moment believes that God is near, but when it passes John resumes his posture of disbelief. He resents their piety because he wants to follow another course in life and not to be like them at all. "For he had made his decision. He would not be like his father, or his father's fathers." (p. 19)

John hates his father, the church he attends so often, and the church members whom he observes praising the Lord each day with nearly every breath they take. At the same time, he learns to hate God for wielding an overwhelming influence over those around him, over those who prevent him from living the kind of life he desires. The church, its people and the God they serve form a kind of invincible wall around John which makes him that much more eager to claim the way of the flesh and ignore the way of the spirit.

John masks his inner conflict with good manners and obedience, afraid to show his true feelings except when alone. When he steals away to see a movie downtown he is thrilled by the personality of the heroine in the picture, for she is not religious and is a symbol of what he wants to be. "Nothing tamed or broke her, nothing touched her, neither kindness, nor scorn, nor hatred, nor love. She had never thought of prayer." (p. 39) So great is John's contempt for Gabriel that, during a family quarrel, when Gabriel strikes Elizabeth, John remembers how highly respected his father is in the church, which never witnesses his brutality at home, and Baldwin relates John's feelings: "This man, God's minister, had struck John's mother, and John had wanted to kill him...and wanted to kill him still." (p. 51) He often thinks of his father's destruction; as Baldwin points out, "He lived for the day when his father would be dying and he, John, would curse him on his death-bed." (p. 51)

Baldwin shows how debilitating religion has been in the lives of urban (ghetto) blacks. Some become hypocrites, others are made to bow to God because they think He will save them from the torture of this world, and still others see the misery religion inflicts upon their "sisters" and "brothers" and run from it--out of rage--to a desolate life. The white God has successfully completed his task of dehumanizing the black American urban ghetto dweller, according to Baldwin.

Nostalgia is another theme treated in the novel. Various characters look at their past nostalgically. These include Gabriel Grimes, Florence and Elizabeth. The significance of nostalgia is to illustrate that the past life of people is part of their living present. It also shows that one cannot completely forget one's past

experiences, for they keep coming back at one time or another in one's memories. Gabriel has memories of his past life recurringly, notably the reminiscences of his relationships with various personalities such as Deborah Grimes, his first wife. He also looks back at some bad experiences Deborah had during her childhood, especially her worst ordeal. Just before Gabriel had married Deborah, he had thought of her sexual violation:

For he remembered how much older she was than he--eight years; he tried to imagine, for the first-time in his life, that dishonor (when Deborah was sixteen years old, she had been taken away into the fields by many white men, where they did things to her to make her cry and bleed) (p. 16) to which Deborah had been forced so many years ago by white men: her skirts above her head, her secrecy discovered by white men. How many? How had she borne it? Had she screamed? Then he thought (but it did not really trouble him, for if Christ to save him could be crucified, he, for Christ's greater glory, could well be mocked) of what smiles would be occasioned, what filthy conjectures, barely sleeping now, would mushroom upward overnight like Jonah's gourd, when people heard that he and Deborah were going to be married. (p. 109)

Also, during another episode, when his step-son John Grimes stares at him, Gabriel's memories of his past are rekindled:

Gabriel had never seen such a look on John's eyes while the spirit spoke; and yet John's staring eyes tonight reminded Gabriel of other eyes: of his mother's eyes when she beat him, of Florence's eyes when she mocked him, of Deborah's eyes and Royal's eyes, and Elizabeth's eyes tonight before Roy cursed him, and of Roy's eyes when Roy said, 'you black bastard.' (p. 150)

In all those cases, the memories are of personal conflicts and painful moments in his life or Deborah's.

Florence is another character whose nostalgia is full of negative memories. When her husband Frank dies in France her mind "travels" back to her past:

Ten years. Their battle never ended; they never bought a home. He died in France. Tonight she remembered details of those years which she thought she had forgotten, and at last

she felt the stony ground of her heart break up, and tears, as difficult and slow as blood, began to trickle through her fingers. This the old woman above her somehow divined, and she cried: 'Yes, honey, you just let go, honey. Let Him bring you low so He can raise you up.' And was this the way she should have gone? Had she been wrong to fight so hard? Now she was an old woman, and all alone, and she was going to die. And she had nothing for all her battles. It had all come to this; she was on her face before the altar, crying to God for mercy. (p. 88)

Nostalgia for Florence functions as her rationalization for accepting God and Christianity. She looks back at all the problems which have led her to accept Christianity. These are two examples of nostalgia in that novel; there are numerous others which have not been mentioned here. The point is that Baldwin used nostalgia to build the psychological memories of the respective characters. Also through nostalgia Baldwin shows that history has an impact, personal and collective, on an individual, whether or not that individual is aware of history. That is evidenced particularly in his use of nostalgia.

In addition to nostalgia, Baldwin also treats the themes of racial conflict and class conflict. Racial conflict between blacks and whites is dealt with, so much so that, even in raising his children, Gabriel instills in them his contempt for whites. For example, when his son Roy, along with his gang, fought a white gang and Roy was injured, Gabriel commanded, "'You (John), come here, boy,' he said, 'and see what them white folks done done to your brother.'" (p. 45) In this episode, Deacon Grimes had already concluded that Roy was never at fault and had been attacked without provocation. Gabriel continued his railing by saying, "You see? ...It was white folks, some of them white folks you like so much, that tried to cut your brother's throat." (p. 45) Whether this accusation is justifiable or not is not the point. The entire episode reveals the intensity of racial conflict among blacks and

whites. It is so pronounced that when white police brutalize the black people they attack not merely black criminals, but any black male; their prejudice against and stereotypes of black people permit them to perceive all black people as criminals. Richard, for example, falls victim to white police simply because of his black skin. Like Deborah, Royal and Roy, he falls foul of white society. This upsets Elizabeth so much that

She could not, that day, think of one decent white person in the whole world. She sat there, and she hoped that one day God, with tortures inconceivable, would grind them utterly into humility, and make them know that black boys and black girls, whom they treated with such condescension, such disdain, and such good humor, had hearts like human beings, too, more human hearts than theirs. (p. 173)

Sex is another theme which is dealt with extensively in the novel. Gabriel impregnates his mistress Esther, who bears a son, Royal. Esther, who takes Gabriel as her lover only briefly, finds that he is eager to doubt that he has fathered her son. Nevertheless, as proud as Florence, she defies him to insult her as promiscuous, unable to name the child's father. Royal is brought up in Gabriel's Southern hometown, and father and son meet only once. Similarly, the married life of Florence and her husband Frank is full of problems. Although she loves him hopelessly, he lives a sensual existence that reminds her painfully of her brother's. Florence's and Frank's marriage was a fiasco. Florence was disappointed in her husband. "He drank too much." (p. 81) He "did not make enough money to buy the home she wanted, or anything else she really wanted, and this had been part of the trouble between them." (p. 84) They were married for ten years, but it was an unfulfilled marriage. When Florence could not bear the marriage anymore, "all the rage she had accumulated during their marriage was

told Frank one evening." (p. 82) Frank went to France and never returned. "He lived for a long while with another woman, and when the war came he died in France." (p. 82)

The theme of sex is also treated in the relationships of other characters. For example, Elizabeth has brought an illegitimate child, John, fathered by Richard, into the world. She fell in love with Richard during the last summer of her girlhood and followed him north to Harlem. After Richard's suicide, Elizabeth marries Gabriel. That marriage represents her need of safety, her timidity and her imagined atonement for her sin.

Before his marriage to Elizabeth, Gabriel has had his own sex life. For example, during his joyless marriage to Deborah he had a brief affair with Esther, and when informed that she was pregnant with his child he refused all emotional support. Esther dies in childbirth, and her son Royal, who grows to manhood unacknowledged by his father, is killed in a Chicago dive. Soon after the death of Royal, Deborah dies childless and Gabriel is left without an heir. When he moves north, however, the Lord sends him a sign in the form of an unwed mother, Elizabeth, and her fatherless child. He marries Elizabeth and promises to raise Johnny as his own son. In the course of time the marriage results in the birth of Roy, and Gabriel rejoices in the fulfillment of God's promise. Through Gabriel's sexual affairs, Baldwin is showing how a preacher can be a hypocrite morally.

Crisis of adolescence is another significant theme treated in Go Tell It On The Mountain. John Grimes, aged fourteen, the protagonist, has three crises. First, he is not loved by his stepfather; the problem is that he wants his stepfather to care about him. Secondly, he resents

efforts to force religion upon him. John yearned for a very different lifestyle; he imagined that he was "a poet, or a college president, or a movie star, who drank expensive whiskey, and smoked Lucky Strike cigarettes in the green package." (p. 19) Thirdly, he has an identity problem. John is concerned with the discovery of identity through religion. Baldwin commences his first chapter with "I looked up and wondered," (p. 11) which establishes the idea of one seeking or looking for something, but not finding it. Thus John is portrayed as a sensitive adolescent making the difficult passage to manhood and desperately searching for his own identity.

Baldwin's vision of the brotherhood of man, represented in the deposition of the father-figure and the initiation of the son into the company of the saints, a religious equivalent of the human brotherhood, is one of the major themes in that novel. That process is exemplified in part three of the novel, wherein the deposition of the stepfather and the elevation of the son to equal status as a "saved" member of the congregation is presented.

'Praise the Lord,' said his father. He did not move to touch him, did not kiss him, did not smile. They stood before each other in silence, while the saints rejoiced; and John struggled to speak the authoritative, the living word that would conquer the great division between his father and himself. (p. 207)

Through the theme of brotherhood, Baldwin seems to be suggesting that, according to Christianity and other religions, all people are like brothers and hence equal in God's eyes. Closely linked to the theme of brotherhood is the theme of love. Love is treated in the novel on various levels; for example, the type of father-son love relationship which "John so eagerly wants from his father, but he did not get

it."⁶⁷ There are other kinds of love. There is the "erotic" definition (Elizabeth and Richard) that is presented with some degree of sympathy, but as also having the least chance of success.⁶⁸ There is also the type of love that exists between relatives.

Familial definition of love (Gabriel and John; Gabriel and Elizabeth; Gabriel and Florence), and what may be termed social love, much closer to 'agape' but dealing specifically with the failure of human relationships in society.⁶⁹

Finally there is Baldwin's homosexuality. Macebuh asserts that "There is also the homosexual definition of love (John and Elisha)."⁷⁰ This is found in the last section of the novel, where Elisha and John have a certain close relationship "with arms around each other's shoulder." (p. 217) The two had been quite close even before John was saved. As Baldwin puts it: "And he (Elisha) kissed John on the forehead, a holy kiss. It fell over Elisha like a golden robe, and struck John's forehead where Elisha had kissed him, like a seal ineffaceable forever." (p. 221) Most critics have interpreted their relationship as homosexual. The critic Sylvander says: "The 'seal is effaceable forever.' Elisha's kiss on John's forehead at the conclusion of the book becomes a kind of spiritual translation of the physical attraction suggested between the two young men."⁷¹ Baldwin seems to be hinting

⁶⁷Stanley Macebuh, James Baldwin: A Critical Study (New York: Third Press, Joseph Okpaku Publishing Co., Inc., 1973), p. 52.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Carolyn Wedin Sylvander, James Baldwin (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1980), p. 43.

that, although homosexuality exists among some people in the United States, it is unacceptable to the American majority. As one critic says:

The treatment of homosexuality in the novel, however, seems radical. It appears radical because of its seeming relation to perceived social standards of conduct and morality regarding homosexuality.⁷²

Economic and psychological strains operating on black family cohesion is another theme in the novel. Most of the characters perform menial jobs and live under hard conditions. These include Florence, Frank, Elizabeth and Richard, as mentioned earlier. Psychological strains experienced by the black family can best be exemplified through John. Throughout the frustrations and dissatisfactions of John's life there appear discontents caused by his family's unrest and constant quarreling. Gabriel Grimes cannot totally accept the "bastard" John as his son, thus augmenting John's desire to really know himself--to have an identity with someone or something. Discontent is also evident in other members of the family; dissension exists between Florence, Gabriel's sister (who actually, and pathetically, lives in a dirty, cramped furnished room which is an additional source of misery to her during her painful illness), and John; there is dissension between Gabriel and his wife, Elizabeth; there is dissension between Gabriel and his children, particularly John, who is not biologically his child. The basis of many of the arguments lies in Gabriel's biased and impatient feelings toward, and ill treatment of, John. All of these arguments and

⁷²Therman B. O'Daniel, ed. James Baldwin: A Critical Evaluation (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1977), p. 8.

dissensions within his family intensify his wish to "find himself." By the end of the book John is able to accept his life and identity and go his way. John has found himself and prepared himself to aid others in finding themselves, fulfilling the idea of some observant persons--at church and school--that he would be a leader of his people. Although John receives only his religious identity by the end of the book, "it is implied that John will be a leader in his church to counteract the hypocritical actions of his father."⁷³

Since content and form are inseparable in any work of literature, the next section will discuss the various techniques (which are part of form) used in Go Tell It On The Mountain. One of the significant techniques is characterization.

It is through the characterization of John Grimes that many themes of the novel are revealed. John is described as an intelligent, brilliant, observant young man who "looked" and "wondered," "watched" and "searched" for identity. Through Baldwin's vivid discription of John we learn of the hypocrisy of the preacher who is also his stepfather, Gabriel Grimes. It is also through the characterization of John Grimes that the important themes of the crisis of adolescence and the search for identity are treated, as observed earlier in this essay.

Elizabeth Grimes, the mother of John, shares the name of the Biblical Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. Baldwin's Elizabeth is ambitious; she wants a husband, a good education and a good job. The

⁷³Eliza Marcella Young, "The Search for Identity in the Work of James Baldwin," p. 19.

section entitled "Elizabeth's Prayer" evokes a true love affair, delicately described and tragically concluded when Elizabeth too goes north, to Richard.

Her pretext for coming to New York was to take advantage of the greater opportunities the north offered colored people; to study in a northern school, and to find a better job than any she was likely to be offered in the south (p. 162).

It is through characterization of Elizabeth that aspects of various themes are treated. For example, through her experience in the big city we learn that there is no big difference between the South and the North, despite the rigidly held belief that the North has more opportunities in education and in the job market to offer than the South. Richard, the father of John and Elizabeth's lover, is another principal character in the novel. Through him one learns about white police brutality, especially against black people, hence signaling the racial conflict between blacks and whites--a conflict which is rooted in the slavery tradition.

Gabriel Grimes is a controversial character. He is seen as an angry, eloquent storefront preacher who is unable to conquer the lusts of his flesh or truly communicate with his children. Hence, through the characterization of Gabriel, Baldwin raises very significant questions about morals regarding religion, marital status and other social matters. Through Gabriel one learns about hypocrisy in some church-goers. Although he is a staunch church-goer, he is ready to attack whites for their wickedness with the greatest subjectivity and prejudice. Although a warmly lauded young preacher, Gabriel is unfaithful to his wife, having a mistress, Esther, with whom he gets a son (Royal). Their relationship begins while he still resides in the South and is married to Deborah. Esther leaves for Chicago to die

(abandoned by him) at the birth of Royal. Maybe Baldwin here is saying that most marriages are not perfect, not even that of a church minister. Baldwin also comments through Gabriel on social matters such as the fantasy-revenge idea which engulfs the lives of ghetto blacks who follow Christianity.

But if the Negro has bought his salvation with pain and the New Testament is used to prove, as it were, the validity of the transformation, it is the Old Testament which is clung to and most frequently preached from, which provides the emotional fire and antomizes the path of bondage, and which promises vengence and assures the chosen of their place in Zion. The favorite text of my father, among the most earnest of ministers, was not 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do' but 'how can I sing the Lord's song in a strange land?'⁷⁴

Florence, Gabriel's sister, is the only character without a Biblical name and the only one who essentially rejects the protection of religion until the very end of her life, after the death of her mother and husband. Florence is important because she serves various purposes such as commenting on the themes of religion and nostalgia.⁷⁵

Frank, Florence's husband, "sang the blues, and drank too much." (p. 81) He never met Florence's expectations of a husband. Frank took a mistress who lived with him in New York before he went to France, where he was killed in combat during the First World War. The mistress was black, and Florence learned of her husband's death from her because the Army had been given her name as his wife despite her not having been married to him. (p. 82) The characterization of Frank seems to serve the purpose of commenting on the problem of male-female relationships,

⁷⁴Ibid., quoted from James Baldwin, Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son (New York: Dell Publishing Company, Inc., 1954), pp. 43-44.

⁷⁵See pages 355, 358-360 for further information on Florence.

but specifically it seems to portray the unstable black male-female relationship in their white-dominated American society.

Finally, there is Elisha, John's Sunday school teacher. Although religious, his character serves to comment on the theme of "love" and "homosexuality." As the critic Macebuh points out, "Elisha and John love each other as much, if more discreetly, as Richard and Elizabeth do, and they are both black and young. Indeed, there is a suggestion at the end of the story that their love grows rather than dies."⁷⁶ In treating Elisha and John's relationship, Baldwin is able to comment on the homosexual as one form of love. As the critic Jerry H. Bryant asserts:

Outcasts--which for Baldwin blacks and homosexuals (white or black) always are--are pained by the way they are treated, forced into void, but paradoxically they are the ones⁷⁷ who are best equipped to enter reality and true brotherhood.

In this case, Baldwin seems to believe that homosexual love can reflect both the best and the appalling worst in human nature. It can be loyal, steadfast, forgiving and even tender, but also cruel and even agonizing, partly because of society's generally negative attitude to its existence. The concept of love occurs recurrently in Go Tell It On The Mountain as well as in other works by Baldwin. One critic says that many readers have misunderstood or misread that word:

The word is 'love.' His (Baldwin's) use of the term comes directly out of his experience. About his large and conflict-ridden Harlem family, he says, 'if we had not loved each other, none of us would have survived. About his personal

⁷⁶Macebuh, James Baldwin: A Critical Study, p. 61.

⁷⁷Jerry H. Bryant, "Wright, Ellison, Baldwin--Exorcising the Demon," Phylon 37(June 1976):186.

experience in finding love, he writes that because you love one human being, you see everyone else very differently than you saw them before...and you are both stronger and more vulnerable.⁷⁸

In addition to characterization, for Baldwin style also serves as a technique for eloquent treatment of various messages. His style is marked by paradoxical statements, and eloquent, complex sentences used appropriately to portray the message of Go Tell It On The Mountain. As one critic says:

Baldwin is a chief architect of the eloquent sentence, the complex, interrupted flow of ideas. It is here that his style differs most conspicuously from Wright's or Ellison's, both of whom, for the most part, eschew the extensively modified construction of James Baldwin. Baldwin constructs a sentence, not only with extensive modifiers, but with frequent parenthetical expressions.⁷⁹

An example of Baldwin's usage of the eloquent sentence is the following passage:

...Yes (walking homeward through the fleeing mist, with the cold sweat standing on his brow), yet in vanity and the pride of conquest, he thought of her, of her smell, the heat of her body beneath his hands, of her voice, and her tongue, like the tongue of a cat, and her teeth, and her swelling breast, and how she moved for him, and held him, and labored with him, and how they fell, trembling and groaning, and locked together, into the world again. And, thinking of this, his body freezing with his sweat, and yet altogether violent with the memory of lust, he came to a tree on a gentle rise, beyond which, and out of sight, lay home, where his mother lay. (pp. 95-96)

This tendency toward the rather long and complex sentence structure, a structure complicated by extensive modifiers and parenthetical expressions, is obviously, like the paradoxical statement, another

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Cyrus Wesley Hickson, Jr., "The White Critic and the Black Novel" (Master's thesis, Atlanta University, 1971), p. 40.

characteristic of Baldwin's style. "It (the darkness of John's sin) was like his thoughts as he moved about the tabernacle in which his life had been spent; the tabernacle that he hated, yet loved and feared."

(p. 19) "His (John's) father's face was black--like a sad, eternal night; yet in his father's face there burned a fire--a fire eternal in an eternal night." (p. 195) In both examples, the juxtaposition of opposites produces ambiguity and double meaning, an effective technique which heightens the reader's imagination. Sometimes paradox comes in the form of indecision, as in "But it did not come, the living word; in the silence something died in John, and something came alive."

(p. 207) Here John has just been saved and is struggling to testify to his salvation.

Baldwin's choice of words is remarkable. For example, the effect of the choice of words in the following statement: "He (Johnny) watched her face, his heart swollen with love for her and with an anguish, not yet his own, that he did not understand and that frightened him."

(p. 32) In this sentence, the phrase "his heart swollen with love" is remarkable for the unexpected term swollen. Literally, one would think of a heart "filled with love." "Swollen" adds weight to meaning and hence shows how abundant Johnny's love is for his mother, Elizabeth Grimes. Baldwin's choice of words indicates an economically written novel which nonetheless includes various significant human experiences.

Baldwin also employs the technique of flashbacks to explore the various themes in Go Tell It On The Mountain. For example, while we are introduced to Gabriel Grimes; his second wife, Elizabeth Grimes; his stepson, John Grimes; and his "rightful" child by Elizabeth, Roy, at the beginning of the novel, it is not until about three-quarters of the way

through the work that their histories are unraveled. As one critic asserts: "The novel itself, with its flashbacks into the lives of John's mother, aunt, and stepfather, forces us to relive that history too."⁸⁰

In Go Tell It On The Mountain, Baldwin's utilization of metaphorical power, for example, original metaphors, Biblical metaphors, and religious symbolism, is very poetic and quite revealing. Throughout the novel, Baldwin clearly indicates the central importance of religious symbolism through his extensive use of Biblical allusions. The title of the novel, Go Tell It On The Mountain, is a Biblical allusion because it originates in a Negro spiritual whose message refers to the "good news," as presented in the New testament, regarding the fact that "Jesus is born." Allen thinks that the title has a double meaning, that provided above as well as its reference to Moses' message to the pharaoh, "Let my people go." The ambiguity of the allusion in the title is intentional, and also suggests the unity of Old Testament and New Testament faith that is characteristic of the Christian belief described in the novel--the teachings of a sect formed from Baptist practices and Calvinist doctrines, grounded in frequent reading of the King James translation of the Bible, and influenced by the needs, hopes and artistic expression of Negro slaves.⁸¹ Another Biblical metaphor is found in part three of the novel while John is on the threshing floor ready to be converted. He has a flashback to his sin:

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 185.

⁸¹Allen, "Religious Symbolism and Psychic Reality," p. 175.

Yes, he had sinned: one morning, alone, in the dirty bathroom, in the square, dirt-gray cupboard room that was filled with the stink of his father. Sometimes leaning over the cracked 'tattle-tale gray' bath tub, he scrubbed his father's back; and looked, as the accursed son of Noah had looked, on his father's hideous nakedness. It was secret, like sin, and slimy, like the serpent, and heavy, like the rod. Then he hated his father, and longed for the power to cut his father down.

Was this why he lay here, thrust out from all human or heavenly help tonight? This, and now that other, his deadly sin, having looked on his father's nakedness and mocked and cursed him in his heart? Ah, that son of Noah's had been cursed, down to the present groaning generation: A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. (p. 197)

This episode is similar to Noah's and Ham's story, as told in Genesis 9:20-25. It is significant because many people have used it to explain why black people were enslaved and persecuted because of their color.

Despite its (Noah's and Ham's story) simplicity and brevity--a son looking on a drunken, naked father in his tent--the curse which Noah places on Ham and his descendants has long been taken historically to explain and justify enslavement of black people, supposed descendants of Ham. John confronts an engrained tradition connecting his dark skin with sin, and sex with sin.⁸²

The reader is struck by the Biblical allusions and religious imagery of the book. One not thoroughly familiar with the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, or with traditional hymns and prayers, particularly of American black churches, will miss many of them. However, when those allusions are discovered and examined, it is evident that "the language Baldwin chooses supports his characters and themes throughout the novel."⁸³ As Shirley S. Allen adds: "Through religious symbolism, Baldwin suggests that the conversion which frees him from sin is also

⁸²Sylvander, James Baldwin, pp. 42-43.

⁸³Ibid., pp. 41-42.

his psychological initiation into maturity, which frees him from the umbilical cord and racial hatred."⁸⁴

Baldwin also utilizes folk material in Go Tell It On The Mountain. Folk material here refers to the religious beliefs, customs and traditions that the people (whom Baldwin is describing) acquired as they were passed from generation to generation. One use of this material is found in the religion of the storefront church and in the crux of Gabriel's dream, in which he finds himself on a high mountain and is constantly beckoned by a voice to "come higher," symbolic of Gabriel's eternal and futile attempt to get closer to God in order that he may relieve himself of the pangs of a guilty conscience. Gabriel's dream is powerful testimony to how Baldwin is able to get inside his character and translate him to the reader, of how he translates his character's hopes, his fears, his frustrations and aspirations in symbolic terms. The following passage is an illustration of how Baldwin penetrates the inner torment of his characters and how he projects the paradoxical dilemma which many of his characters confront. Here Gabriel and some of his neighbors, as is their traditional social and religious custom, are at his mother's deathbed:

Later, since it was Sunday, some of the brothers and sisters would come to her, to sing and pray around her bed. And she would pray for him (Gabriel), sitting up in bed unaided, her head lifted, her voice steady; while he, kneeling in a corner of the room, trembled and almost wished that she would die; and trembled again at this testimony to the desperate wickedness of his heart; and prayed without words to be forgiven. For he had no words when he knelt before the throne. And he feared to make a vow before Heaven until he

⁸⁴Allen, "Religious Symbolism and Psychic Reality," p. 199.

had the strength to keep it. And yet he knew that until he made the vow he would never find the strength. (p. 93)

In this episode, Baldwin utilizes folk material such as song, prayer, and the religious performance that accompanies them to reflect the kind of mood and emotions that the people (those described in the novel and also other people in the community on which the novel is based) go through when one of their loved relatives is about to die. The importance of such use of folk material is that it gives reality to the unsophisticated characters and to the cultural heritage they bear.

In sum, the techniques of Go Tell It On The Mountain include: characterization, plot, flashbacks, metaphors, religious symbolism as well as the use of folk material, which Baldwin uses with considerable skill and talent. It is a moving novel. Its style is comprised of paradoxical statements, eloquent complex sentences, as well as powerful diction. It is not simply a novel, but a major American masterpiece. Its contents are also revealing and dramatically represented, as observed in the preceding discussion.

The critical reception of Go Tell It On The Mountain has been positive ever since its publication in 1953. There were many critical reviews of the novel in 1953, and since then much critical work has been generated by it. Most critics concur that this novel is one of Baldwin's greatest successes and that it is an unsurpassed portrayal of superbly individualized human beings caught up in dramatic struggle and inevitable change. For reference to the contemporary and subsequent critical reception of Go Tell It On The Mountain, Fred L. Standley and Nancy V. Standley, James Baldwin: A Reference Guide is very helpful.

Finally, Paule Marshall's Brown Girl, Brownstones, the last of the selected novels, will be discussed.

Like the heroine of Brown Girl, Brownstones, Paule Marshall, whose parents emigrated from Barbados during World War I, grew up in Brooklyn during the Depression. After graduating Phi Beta Kappa from Brooklyn College in 1953, she worked as a magazine writer and researcher with assignments in Brazil and the West Indies. Much of Brown Girl, Brownstones was written on trips to Barbados in the late fifties. Two years after its publication, in 1961, Marshall dealt with the problems of aging in her collection of short stories, Soul Clap Hands and Sing. In 1969 she published her most ambitious novel, The Chosen Place, The Timeless People, the story of a black woman who wrestles with the corruption of history to find her place within the hemisphere, not merely within the family. Marshall's other novel is Praisesong for the Widow. In it she continues her obsession with the need for black people to make the psychological and spiritual journey back through their past.⁸⁵

The historical setting of Brown Girl, Brownstones is Brooklyn during the Depression and World War II. It also necessarily recounts some events during and after the First World War. It is the fiercely told story of Barbadian immigrants settled in New York and striving to surmount poverty and racism and make their new country a home.

The novel shows the small Barbadian group (Bajan, as they call themselves), living in the city like poor European ethnic groups or like black Americans. Given the worst and poorest-paying jobs, they worked hard, saved their money and sacrificed to educate their children for jobs better than those they had. Silla Boyce, the wife of Deighton Boyce and Selina's mother, works hard, saying: "Lord, lemme do better than this. Lemme rise!"⁸⁶ She cries when she is down on her knees

⁸⁵Mary Helen Washington, "About the Author of Brown Girl, Brownstones," Introduction to Brown Girl, Brownstones by Paule Marshall (New York: The Feminist Press, 1959).

⁸⁶Paule Marshall, Brown Girl, Brownstones (New York: The Feminist Press, 1959), p. 20. All subsequent quotations from this text will be cited from this edition, unless otherwise noted.

scrubbing "the Jew floor," and she feels it is the inevitable nature of power to give way to the next group forceful enough to seize it. Like the other Barbadians in her community, she has staked out a claim to power with a carefully conceived plan. The plan is to: work night and day to buy a house; rent out every room, and overcharge if necessary; sacrifice every penny to maintain property; keep strict vigilance on the children so they will enter high-paying professions; stick close to the Bajans, and exclude American blacks, who are only a "keepback;" as soon as one house is paid for, move to the next desirable location, preferably Crown Heights; imitate the Jew. (p. 173) Marshall also comments on urban life, vividly depicting its dynamic machines and how their noises affect life in the urban setting.

Nostalgia is another of the significant themes in Brown Girl, Brownstones. To Silla the island of Barbados represents poverty, oppression and a poetry and beauty that she both misses and despises. According to Selina's father, he longs to return to Barbados. When an unexpected legacy gives Deighton two acres of island land, he begins to make plans to return home. As he says himself: "And we gon' have a house there--just like the white people own. A house to end all house!" (p. 12)

Evidence of their nostalgia is also present in the Barbadian folk songs which they sing and in their keeping of Barbadian delicacies such as "black pudding, which is the intestines of the pig stuffed with grated sweet potato, beets, animal blood and spices until it is a thick sausage, then tied at the ends and boiled; also souse, which she made by pickling parts of the pig; and coconut or sweet bread, a heavy bread with coconut running in a rich vein through the center." (p. 67)

Marshall refers to the music thus:

The music persisted through the bride and groom's departure; it screeched and thudded late into the evening, binding the dancers together, setting them apart from all other people.

'Small Island, go back where you come from.
Small Island, go back where you come from.
You come from Trinidad in a fishing boat,
And now you wearing a great big overcoat!
Small Island, go back where you really come from.

You see them Bajans, they're the worse of them all!
You hear them say 'I ain't gwine back at all.'
They come by the one and they come by the two,
And now you see them all over Lenox Avenue.
Small Island, go back where you really come from...'(p. 148)

The song is evidence of nostalgia because it mentions Bajan homes of origin such as Trinidad and a Small Island, which probably is Barbadoes. Also, because certain songs are sung in Barbadian dialect the singers seem to be reminiscing on their past, inducing a nostalgic mood. Thus, as in Invisible Man, Go Tell It On The Mountain, and Sister Carrie, the theme of nostalgia is also treated in Brown Girl, Brownstones.

Social conflict, that is, racial and class conflict, is also treated. In Brown Girl, Brownstones, the racist attitude of white America looms large in the background. Selina's cry of anguish voices the feelings of people of all minorities. Her desire for revenge, "to grab the cane and rush into some store on Fulton Street and avenge that wrong by bringing it smashing across the white face behind the counter," (p. 216) is not uncommon. The racial conflict between whites and blacks was so pronounced that "sometimes the white children on their way to school laughed at them and shouted 'nigger,' but the Barbadian women sucked their teeth, dismissing them. Their only thought was of the 'few

raw-mout pennies' at the end of the day which would eventually buy house." (p. 11)

The class conflict between blacks and whites is evident in the fact that whites with the same education as blacks hold better jobs than do blacks. That inequity is such a common experience that when Deighton tries to get a good education, Seifert, another character, tells him a bleak truth:

"'Boyce, Mahn,' he began softly 'you can know all the accounting there is, these people still not gon have you up in their fancy office and pulling down the same money as them.'" (p. 39)

The racial conflict is also evidenced in the workplace. Silla Boyce has experienced discrimination at work: "Take me on this job, for instance. When I first came they wun put me to work on the lathe. Just because your skin black some these white people does think you can't function like them." (p. 102) Selina also becomes more fully conscious of the conflict between blacks and whites and of its danger to her personally after experiencing it herself; as she tells her boyfriend, Clive: "This girl's mother... she... she... well, she just put me in my place, I guess you might say... . Reminded me that I was only a nigger after all... ." (p. 297) As Adam David Miller puts it:

It is not until she is humiliated by a white friend's mother who compares her with her West Indian maid (and Selina had been to college, too!) that she recognizes that she, too, may suffer by being black.⁸⁷

The crisis of adolescence is another theme in the novel, which basically tells the story of Selina's passing from childhood to

⁸⁷Adam David Miller, Review of Brown Girl, Brownstones, Black Scholar 3(May 1972):57.

womanhood. She has to be considered in relation to both her parents, as she is a key figure in conflict between them. Her growing up is tied closely to her ability to see herself in her mother and her mother in her. Selina fought the realization that she was her mother's child, rather than her father's, because she loved her father dearly and thought she hated her mother, while at the same time admiring her.

Selina spent most of her girlhood defending Deighton when Silla attacked him. She thought her mother frequently cruel and unjust. She excused her father's failures. She had no sense of her mother's suffering until she herself suffered from the failure of a weak man, Clive Springer, to give her the support she needed in a crisis. Similarly, she had no feeling for her mother's strength until she realized that it was very much like her own. So it was that when Selina most felt herself a woman she recognized her mother in her. As one critic concludes: "Selina is caught between the conflicting attitudes of her parents, though she sympathizes clearly with her father."⁸⁸

Religion also is one of the major themes in Brown Girl, Brown-stones. When Deighton Boyce returns from the hospital, he has been converted to Christianity and has found God; as a result, his philosophy of life and his activities have changed. He devotes all his time to religion instead of to school, as he had done previously. Nothing beyond religious literature now seems important to him. He reads papers entitled, "The New Light, I am the father universal and I am Jehovah."

⁸⁸Leela Kapai, "Dominant Themes and Technique in Paule Marshall's Fiction," College Language Association Journal 16(September 1972):50.

(p. 160) Deighton even takes his family to see "Father Peace," who, according to Deighton, "heals the lame." (p. 165) When Selina calls him "Daddy," Deighton says that she should not call him father, but brother. (p. 171) Deighton's new way of thinking is unlike Silla's. She believes that life is not in the Father, but on this earth, where people toil to survive. (p. 172)

The effects of the Second World War on selected groups of Americans is another important theme in the novel. Chapter three of Brown Girl, Brownstones is entitled "The War." The entire chapter is symbolic; in it one observes the war between husband and wife, Deighton and Silla, over inherited land; one also sees war between Selina and her mother; there is war, or rather tension (violence), between the two sisters, Selina and Ina, who are never congenial. Also, the same chapter reflects the effects of the actual war on other people. For example, "People were frightened by it." (p. 67) There are references to Hitler: "They say that Hitler put all the Jews in a gas chamber." (p. 69) The name "Hitler" is also used symbolically when Ina and Selina call their mother "Hitler" (p. 183) because of her evil deeds. For instance, she asks the American government to deport her husband to Barbados. Later on, when Deighton is reported dead, the cause of his death is not made clear. Deighton, now aging and very poor, was bound for his birthplace when he died at sea in August, 1945. He may have fallen overboard, although suicide appears far more likely. Marshall refuses to clarify the issue absolutely. The end of the war is also used symbolically, for it marks the end or death of Deighton Boyce. (p. 185) Thus Marshall achieves a twofold purpose by her references to the war, first to comment on World War II and its effects on the Barbadian people in

America; secondly, and more significantly, to comment symbolically on its impact on the lives of her characters.

A significant aspect of this novel is that, unlike the other novels, women here receive more careful attention than men. As Marshall herself asserts,

Women do figure prominently in my books. And I'm concerned about letting them speak their piece, letting them be central figures, actors, activists in fiction rather than just back-drop or background figures. (p.324)

Indeed, in Brown Girl, Brownstones women are more aggressive and more hard-working than the men. For example, while Silla's husband is lazy, easy-going and romantic, she scrubs floors in order to support her family. She understands poverty, political demagoguery and the harassment of the down-trodden, and she can express that understanding in haunting, poetic words. Her daughter Selina is small, willful, and quiet, but she is always listening unnoticed in the corners of rooms, absorbing culture and tradition. She is given several guides, each of whom connects her with her culture in vital ways and provides important messages about the uniqueness of her personal identity. First there is Suggie Skeete, who gives Selina crucial lessons of love and passion to thwart the puritanical codes of the Bajans. Then there is Miss Thompson, the black American hairdresser who is Selina's link to black Americans, to the Barbadians and to her African past. But the most powerful guide to Selina is the mother, Silla Boyce. As Mary Helen Washington says: "The romantic side of Selina may very well be her father's doing, but that assertive, willful, forthright girl, taking her life into her own hands, managing city college and a full-time love affair at eighteen, is Silla Boyce's daughter." (p. 321)

Characterization is one way an author may concretize or make dramatic various themes. Silla Boyce is one of the significant characters in the novel. As one critic points out, "Hardworking, outspoken, Silla Boyce is the monumental tragic figure at the heart of Brown Girl, Brownstones."⁸⁹ She is intelligent and has the will and power to do anything in the manner she wants it done. Mary Helen Washington says of Silla: "She is the community. She symbolizes its power. She reflects its values, she embodies its history. Her sorrow is the sorrow of the race."⁹⁰ The heroine is caught between her respect for her hard-working, ambitious mother, who longs for a brownstone row-house, and her deep love for her easy-going father. Selina is the one who interprets and makes sense out of the three major conflicts in her family's life, "the rigid codes of the Barbadian community, her mother's need for security, and her father's definition of a proud manhood that supersedes everyone's concerns." (p. 318) Suggie Skeete, an upstairs roomer in the Deighton house, is a pleasure-loving prostitute who "moves" with many different men. Miss Thompson, the black American hairdresser whose beauty shop on Fulton Street is like a way-station, oversees the comings and goings of all who pass. Her face is described as resembling "an African wood carving: mysterious, ominiscent; the features elongated by compassion, the eyes shrouded with a profound

⁸⁹Alexis DeVeaux, "Paule Marshall: In Celebration of Our Triumph," Essence 10(May 1971):76-77.

⁹⁰Mary Helen Washington, "Afterword," in Brown Girl, Brownstones, p. 313. All subsequent quotations from this "Afterword" will be taken from this edition, unless otherwise noted.

sadness." (p. 41) Her significance in the novel stems from the fact that

she presides over Selina's elevation to womanhood, giving her her first curls, pronouncing that she 'ain't no more child,' and finally telling Selina the story of her own resistance to the brutality of racism. She is the link to Selina's larger community, to black Americans, whom the Bajans despise, to the Barbadians with whom she encourages Selina's reconciliation, and to her half-forgotten African past. (p. 320)

Thus, the author, by creating female characters who are full of life, power and knowledge, testifies to black women's willingness to do hard work and to their intelligence and aggressiveness in achieving their goals for improving their own lives and those of their family members.

On the other hand, the male characters are lazy, weak and not outspoken. Deighton Boyce is such a male. His dark body is often described as limp and sensual, whereas Silla's body is stiff, towering, and unbending. Deighton does not work hard to earn a living for his family; instead his family, especially his wife, works hard to provide for the entire family. Deighton fails in his attempts to gain acceptance and respect from the Bajan community. He may be correctly regarded as charming, pathetic and ultimately doomed by his lack of the fierce self-discipline which makes Silla the deeply motivated, but harsh, person she becomes before she parts with Selina. Similarly, Clive is weaker than Selina. It is important, however, that Marshall is also sympathetic toward her male characters.

The plot of Brown Girl, Brownstones is organized around Selina Boyce's passage from childhood to adulthood. Most of the events are seen from her point of view, and her consciousness is informed by them. That novel is divided into four sections. Section one, entitled "A Long Day and a Long Night," introduces the readers to the main

characters. Section two, "Pastorale," emphasizes Deighton's nostalgia for his homeland as well as the difficult process of Selina's developing maturity. Section three, "The War," articulates various tensions faced by the Boyce family and the death of Deighton Boyce. This section is the climax of the novel. Section four, "Selina," presents the grown daughters, Selina and Ina, who must leave their mother to start new lives. Marshall employs an eloquent style. The dialogue is picturesque or vivid, and this includes both the standard English and the Barbadian dialect. Marshall uses dialogue to dramatize the events in the novel. For example, the question of Deighton's land in Barbados occupied the minds of the Boyce family, particularly in section two. There the arguments between husband and wife were tense: "Sell it, sell it..." (p. 51) said Silla, and "It's mine to do as I please..." (p. 51) responded Deighton. The eloquence of style is possibly achieved, because as Marshall says, "My concern has always been not only with content, what is being said, but also the way it is being said."⁹¹ Marshall "makes use of the mystical quality of the island where in the solitude each of the major characters faces his past and the flashbacks assist us in understanding his motivation."⁹² The flashback technique is employed as Deighton Boyce reminisces about his boyhood in Barbados. Through flashback Marshall reveals a cultural contrast between the lifestyle of Deighton's children and that of Deighton when he was young. During his youth, he says, on Saturdays the children did

⁹¹Leela Kapai, "Dominant Themes and Technique in Paule Marshall's Fiction," p. 55.

⁹²Ibid.

not go to movies, but stayed home and found plenty to do. They would play cricket, tennis, and football. They would swim, dive in the water or enjoy sea-games:

We would pick up weself and go sea-bathing all down Christ Church where the rich white people live. Stay in the water all day shooting the waves, mahn, playing cricket on the sand, playing lick-cork--lick-cork is just play-fighting in the sea after a cork. (p. 10)

Deighton does not understand what benefit New York children, including his own, derive from movies. In another scene Selina reminisces on the good times she has had with her boyfriend, Clive. (p. 283) In another episode the author comments on the racial problem between blacks and whites. By this time Selina has become such a very good interpretive dancer that she considers herself to be following in the footsteps of the famous dancer Isadora Duncan. She goes to a post-performance party with some of her friends, including Margaret, her white girlfriend. Margaret introduces Selina to her pretentious mother. The conversation between Selina and Margaret's mother leads to the former's first real encounter with racism, and, though she is stunned and humiliated, she ultimately reacts with outrage and affirmation of her oneness with her own people. This episode leads to a flashback providing an earlier conversation between Clive and Selina: "What Clive had said must be true." (p. 291) Clive had warned her that white people are prejudiced against black people and that blacks are invisible to whites. (p. 253) Nevertheless, according to Clive, black people have to confront white people with their humanity until whites begin to see blacks and appreciate them as human beings.

Symbolism at various levels is another technique used. For example, the end of the Second World War represents the end or death of

Deighton. The war itself symbolizes the many problems encountered in the Boyce family. Also, Ina represents the lost love of Deighton. As one critic says of Marshall

...she uses liberally symbolic language to heighten the meaning; thus her novels are very often capable of being taken on different levels of meaning.⁹³

An example of symbolic language can be evidenced in the following sentence describing Selina's feelings. "The mother had deceived her, saying that she was more of a woman than Ina yet never telling her the one important condition." (p. 62) Specifically the word condition is symbolically used to refer to menstruation. Symbolic language is significant here because it is used to refer to a sensitive subject.

Brown Girl, Brownstones deals with conflict between two races and two cultures (whites vs. blacks, black Americans vs. black Barbadians); it deals with the race problem, with white prejudice. The author describes people's passions, frictions and hopes. The novelist utilizes eloquent techniques to articulate all themes dealt with above.

Brown Girl, Brownstones, has never generated a great deal of critical analysis and assessment. It is startling to realize that, although Paule Marshall has published three major books and numerous short stories and articles, she is just now--in the 1980's--being discovered. Reviews of Brown Girl, Brownstones, nevertheless, have been included in the New York Times,⁹⁴ Saturday Review,⁹⁵ New Yorker,⁹⁶

⁹³Ibid., p. 55.

⁹⁴Anonymous reviewer of Brown Girl, Brownstones, New York Times, 19 August 1960, p. 533.

⁹⁵Henrietta Buckmaster, review of Brown Girl, Brownstones, Saturday Review 42(August 29, 1959):14.

⁹⁶Anonymous reviewer of Brown Girl, Brownstones, New Yorker 35(September 19, 1959):191.

New York Herald Tribune,⁹⁷ Library Journal,⁹⁸ Kirkus,⁹⁹ Guardian,¹⁰⁰ Booklist¹⁰¹ and in various other journals. Most of the reviews are positive. For instance, the review in Booklist says of Brown Girl, Brownstones, "A deeply felt and thought-out novel,"¹⁰² and another asserts: "This is a warm and colorful novel: the dialogue is picturesque but never sham; an era is observed most carefully and characterization is decisive."¹⁰³

As seen in this and the preceding chapter, the eight novels chosen for study in this paper articulate most of the salient aspects of American life as they were shaped by the great events of the period, 1900-1959. All of these novels deal with human traits, and their respective authors have manipulated a variety of styles, as we saw in the preceding discussion, to present various themes concerning Americans in particular and mankind in general.

The next chapter is comprised of the summary and conclusion to the dissertation.

⁹⁷ Carol Field, review of Brown Girl, Brownstones, New York Herald Tribune Book Review, 16 August 1959, p. 5.

⁹⁸ F. L. Cinquemani, review of Brown Girl, Brownstones, Library Journal 84 (September 1, 1959): 2522.

⁹⁹ Anonymous reviewer of Brown Girl, Brownstones, Kirkus 27 (July 1, 1959): 461.

¹⁰⁰ Norman Shrapnel, review of Brown Girl, Brownstones, Guardian (August 19, 1960): 5.

¹⁰¹ Anonymous reviewer of Brown Girl, Brownstones, Booklist 56 (October 15, 1959): 119.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ New York Times, 19 August 1960, p. 533.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Ultimately, one can safely say that "Eight Major Exemplars of the Twentieth-Century American Novel, 1900-1959" is a study of novels which can be useful to both students and teachers as illustrated in the entire dissertation and the summary below.

Chapter one provides a review of related literature to the novels, their authors, and the major events shaping the culture of the American people in the period 1900-1959. Also analyzed were books, articles of literary criticism, theses and dissertations relevant to the American culture and history as well as the major developments which shaped American literature of the period studied. Such books are thereby useful to both the teachers and students who would participate in that course. Some of those materials deal generally with American literature, 1900-1959. Others deal specifically with a particular novel of discussion. An example of the former is Joseph Warren Beach's American Fiction: 1920-1940, which asserts that the most important common feature of the period 1920 to 1940 is that it was influenced by the two World Wars as well as the Great Depression. An example of the latter is an article by Leela Kapai entitled "Dominant Themes and Technique in Paule Marshall's Fiction," which discusses major themes in Marshall's works such as identity crisis, the race problem, the importance of tradition for black

Americans and others. These are just two examples, but the point is that in that Chapter similar materials on twentieth-century fiction which students and teachers alike will find useful and significant are reviewed.

In Chapter two American fiction in the twentieth century is discussed. Attention is given to some of the more important historical events which occurred in or significantly affected the United States during that time, as well as to some of the social developments of that era, all of which influenced much of the fiction of the time. These include, Industrialization, the First World War, the Great Depression and the Second World War. In Sister Carrie (1900), for example, ill effects of industrialization and urbanization upon some Americans are vividly described. Carrie, the protagonist of that novel, abandoned the old, conservative morality in order to survive in an urban environment. On the other hand, F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby and Ernest Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises reflect the horror, frustration and boredom experienced by many Americans in the post-World War I era. The character Jake Barnes in The Sun Also Rises illustrates how some people were affected by the First World War and how they coped with that disaster. Jake Barnes, who was rendered impotent by an injury during the war, imposed order on his life chiefly through his work, travel and friends and thereby maintained his integrity and dignity despite of his problems. Social criticism grew more intense during the Great Depression of the 1930's. The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck stands out as a major novel of social protest in American literature. Others of the novels reveal how people were affected by the Second World War. These novels include Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man and Paule

Marshall's Brown Girl, Brownstones. In the former, the author shows the irony of the contribution of black soldiers to the allied struggle in fighting on European battlefields, while at home they were still discriminated against, oppressed and dehumanized. Ellison seems to be questioning whether democracy existed in America, especially as far as black people were concerned. He seems to be asking how the white-dominated government could claim that the country was fighting for democracy in the world when at home blacks lived under undemocratic conditions. In Brown Girl, Brownstones Marshall shows how West Indians now settled in the United States were affected by the Second World War, despised it and longed for peace.

Chapter two also discusses the fact that the ideas of various philosophers such as Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, as well as psychologists like Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung, had a significant impact upon some American novelists. Examples of some of those novelists who were influenced by Jung's remarkable ideas include Baldwin, Fitzgerald, Hemingway and Salinger. There are various other examples to illustrate the influence of both philosopher's and psychologist's ideas but since they were discussed in depth in the second chapter of this study they will not be repeated here.

Literary movements such as realism, regionalism, naturalism and the lost generation were also discussed at length in Chapter two. Dreiser was cited as one of the significant writers who wrote powerful realistic and naturalistic manuscripts. He shocked many readers with the frankness of Sister Carrie. His best-known novel, An American Tragedy, was based on an actual murder case. William Faulkner is a good example of regionalist writers. He based his works on the fictional Mississippi

Country of Yoknapatawpha. Faulkner, a native of the South, laid his plots in this region and drew characters as he conceived Southerners to be. The two outstanding writers of the "lost generation" are Hemingway and Fitzgerald, as discussed in Chapter two. In addition to the literary movements and other developments mentioned above, the Harlem Renaissance, a cultural movement among blacks in the United States, was dealt with in the second chapter. Jean Toomer, Claude McKay, and Langston Hughes are just a few of those discussed in chapter two. Many other novelists of the twentieth-century such as post-war regionalists, Jewish writers and black humor novelists were also described at length in Chapter two. It may be concluded that Chapter two is important to this study because it gives useful general information about American fiction in the twentieth-century.

Chapter three focuses its discussion on the rationale for the selection of novels studied in the dissertation. It also explains why the novelists studied are significant. The selection was based on the artistic and intellectual significance of the novels as well as their reflection of life and manners of the American people during the period 1900-1959. The study also explains why the novelists studied are significant in American letters and hence why it is appropriate that students study them.

Each author's significance is briefly shown below. Theodore Dreiser, as mentioned earlier in this summary, is regarded as the first novelist of his time to describe realistically life in early twentieth-century America. F. Scott Fitzgerald was the most important member of the "lost generation." He belonged to the American upperclass then, which he reflects in his writing and of which he was also an observer. Fitzgerald won

fame with his novel This Side of Paradise, which deals with the wild, rebellious young men and women of the "jazz age" after World War I. Most critics consider The Great Gatsby as Fitzgerald's finest work. It tells of an idealist who is gradually destroyed by the influence of wealth and the pleasure seeking people around him. Like Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, one of the most famous and influential American writers of the twentieth century, also realistically treats some of the more significant effects of the First World War on a few Americans in The Sun Also Rises. Hemingway wrote about the lost generation in this his first novel. The rootless Americans in the story roam France and Spain in a desperate search of fun, and of a faith to believe in. This novel established Hemingway as one of the most influential writers of the 1900's. Many young authors modeled their writing on his simple style. Therefore, it is appropriate that students get to know Hemingway and especially that they study his novel, The Sun Also Rises. Although Hemingway and Fitzgerald share many themes, Fitzgerald, unlike Hemingway, is fascinated by the power of money and privilege over human character in any social context. Despite their differences, like Hemingway, Fitzgerald's own nation after World War I supplies him with his specific material. Fitzgerald is as truly a moralist as Hemingway, as he himself attests. Thus, because of their significance as American writers of the twentieth century, their individual uniqueness as writers and their eloquence of portrayal of subject matter, Hemingway and Fitzgerald were appropriately chosen for study in this paper.

The rationalization for choosing William Faulkner was based on various reasons. One of the reasons is that he is perhaps one of the greatest of American novelists and as a regionalist like others used

realism and naturalism to create true-to-life pictures. Faulkner created as the setting of many of his novels and stories the mythical county of Yoknapatawpha, Mississippi, whose chief town is Jefferson. The fictional Jefferson is roughly based on the city of Oxford, Mississippi, of which Faulkner (1897-1962) was a life-long resident. Intruder in the Dust, set in the mythical county, is different from his other works because it examines the relationship between Southern blacks and whites and the attitudes of both races. Faulkner says that only when the two races work harmoniously can execution of law and justice be achieved. Faulkner attempts, as his Nobel Prize speech declares, to fulfill his writer's task through his thematic treatment of the conviction that every human being is in some way in conflict with himself or herself and that, ultimately, all mankind's defeats and victories are moral, never merely political and material. J. D. Salinger is among the most famous post-World War II American novelists. The Catcher in the Rye will be of interest to the students because it vividly articulates the theme of adolescence. The story of that novel centers on four days in the life of a sixteen-year-old boy who is disgusted by the hypocrisy of the adult world. Even his harshest critics concede that Salinger is fundamentally a sincerely religious man (and novelist) who refuses to abandon hope despite the moral condition of the world in which Holden Caulfield (Salinger's protagonist in The Catcher in the Rye) must survive.

The teachers and students will benefit from their introduction to James Baldwin because he is one of the most widely recognized black American authors. In his writings he has shown that racial prejudice has greatly damaged both black and white people in the United States.

His Go Tell It On The Mountain, fictionalizes that theme vividly, employing a very forceful economy of form. Similarly, Ralph Ellison will be introduced to teachers and students as a perceptive, prominent black American novelist and essayist. Understanding his Invisible Man will be a great asset to students. It is of major significance because of its vivid articulation of the black experience in the United States, for its portrayal of various themes such as those of self-discovery, and individuality and for its powerful use of modern techniques.

Paule Marshall was selected for study in this paper because she has succeeded in creating a significant novel, Brown Girl, Brownstones, which is discussed in this dissertation. Brown Girl, Brownstones is important to students because of its vivid style as well as its treatment of a range of subjects. These include religion, the causes and effects of World War II, political exploitation of Barbadians, poverty, the problems of feminine adolescence and the race problem, to name but a few.

Thus the novels chosen for this study depict significant aspects of American society as they were shaped by the great events of the historical period. They are also important because of the various literary techniques utilized by their authors as discussed earlier in this paper, including plot, characterization, dialogue, description, symbolism, satire, melodrama, diction and suspense, to name but a few. Some of the novels use most of the above; in addition, some employ other techniques which are discussed extensively in Chapters Four and Five. It is, in fact, the value of what the novels say and how eloquently they present what they say that is important and hence will be of great help to both teachers and students.

How, or for what, can the material be useful? The purpose of this dissertation is to provide material which an instructor could use in an actual class. Hence the significance of the material depends on whether it can benefit the students of the proposed class. The course would be useful for a variety of reasons. Since the American novel is not formally taught in most African post-secondary schools, this course is one way of introducing those students to the important American novels. It will acquaint the students with some aspects of the culture of the American people as reflected in specific novels. And as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the course would also help the students to know and understand certain significant American writers of fiction. Also, the themes and techniques dealt with in those novels would help the students understand and appreciate not only American novels but also the novels of other countries as well. The students will increase their understanding of some of the techniques and other novelistic elements, such as themes, found in American fiction as mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Ultimately, one can safely say that the material in this dissertation about twentieth-century American novels can be useful to teachers as well as students.

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